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THE

CAPTIVE YOUTHS OF JUDAH.

By Erasmus W. Jones

New York
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1856

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TO THE

Young Men and Maidens of America,

This Volume

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY ONE WHO FOUND

ON THE SHORES OF COLUMBIA A WELCOME HOME; AND

WHO FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS HAS ENJOYED

THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF

AN ADOPTED CITIZEN.

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PREFACE.

Most of the following pages were written in 1854–5, during the two years of my itinerant labors among the romantic hills of Steuben Circuit, in Oneida County. A laborious charge is that "Old Steuben," but a capital place for a good appetite, with abundance to satisfy the same. Those towering hills, like so many officers of the "Board of Health," frown down indignantly on all diseases, and threaten vengeance on the head of every approaching malady. Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Sorethroat, etc., can never get a living in *those* "diggins." They have repeatedly endeavored to establish themselves there, but invariably, after a few weeks' trial, have been constrained to "take up their bed and walk." Heaven bless that Old Circuit!

This volume is the fruit of my leisure hours; and those hours in the life of a Pastor are not very abundant. That the story has suffered from this, I do not believe. Whatever its defects may be, they are not owing to "the pressure of other duties." What I can do in years to come, if spared to see them, I cannot tell; but at present, I am well persuaded that I am not able to produce anything better. So, dear reader, if this little work proves a failure, let not that *deep calamity* be attributed to any lack, but the lack of ability in the author.

The semi-fictitious style of the writing, while displeasing to some, will be well-pleasing to others. "What I have written I have written;" perhaps in a way peculiar to myself. I know of some who could write charming books on this subject in a very different, and perhaps a far superior style; but these I dare not try to imitate. I must write in my own way. It may be inferior to the way of others; but then it is much better to move around on your own limbs, even

if they *are* rather "short metre," than to parade abroad on stilts in mid-air.

In the colloquies, I have not thought it best to follow strictly the Oriental styles. However pleasing this might have been to some, I am well persuaded that it could not meet the approbation of the generality of readers; and as the great design of the work is to bear with weight upon some of the corrupt usages and wicked policies of the present day, I thought it advisable to shape the phraseology in conformity with modern usages.

In the prosecution of this work, I have consulted the following authorities: Josephus, Rollin's "Ancient History," Smith's "Sacred Annals," "Daniel, a Model for Young Men," by Dr. Scott, Clarke's, Henry's, Scott's, and Benson's Commentaries; with some other smaller works.

In following the "Youths of Judah" through their various trials, at home and in a land of strangers, I have received much genuine pleasure, and lasting profit; and that the reader, likewise, may be greatly pleased and benefited, is the sincere desire of his unworthy servant,

ERASMUS W. JONES.

BELGIUM, ONONDAGA CO.,
June 1*st*, 1856.

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CAPTIVE YOUTHS OF JUDAH.

CHAPTER I.

A ROYAL FEAST WITH AN UNPALATABLE DESSERT.

NIGHTLY, the walls of the royal palace rang with the sound of high revelry. Laughter and drunken song echoed through every part of that proud edifice. Jehoiakim, King of Judah, following in the footsteps of many of his predecessors, did "that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," and filled the Holy City with his foul abominations. Regardless of the commands of God, he gave way to all his passions and depraved appetites. His counsellors also lived in utter forgetfulness of the God of Israel. They flattered his extreme vanity, and encouraged his foul abominations. By the greatest majority, the services of the Temple were lightly esteemed, and godliness in Jerusalem, the "City of the Great King," was at

a low ebb. Pride and infidelity promenaded together. Crimes of the darkest hue were the order of the day; and although God's Prophets had the holy courage to rebuke their glaring iniquities and warn them of their approaching fearful doom, yet they were looked upon by the populace as a few delirious fanatics, laboring under the effects of disordered brains and bewildered imaginations. Thus iniquity abounded among all grades and classes; from the king on his throne, to the beggar in the street; from the refined scholar, to the most ignorant in Jerusalem.

The night was serene and calm. The glorious orb shone brightly in the eastern skies, and shed her silvery beams on the glassy lakes of Judea. In the clear moonbeams, those lofty towers of spotless white stood forth in majestic grandeur on the walls of the great metropolis. Nature, with smiles of lovely innocence on her fair countenance, was hushed to sweet repose; but not so the busy thousands that thronged the wide thoroughfares of Jerusalem. This day was one of the anniversaries of Jehoiakim's reign; and at an early hour the city presented a scene of excitement. The king's vanity provided everything requisite for a general display; and although far from being loved by his numerous subjects, yet, because they could eat, drink, and be

merry at the expense of others, the streets of Jerusalem were thronged by those who cared far more for the gratification of their appetites, than they did for their vain sovereign.

The royal palace was thronged with the rich, the great, the gay, and the giddy. Unholy excitement ran high. Wines and strong drinks flowed freely. Flattery without measure was poured into the ears of the king. "Long live Jehoiakim!" echoed from a thousand voices. The Prophets of the Most High, who prophesied evil against Jerusalem, were ridiculed and laughed to scorn; and those few persons of influence who regarded them in a favorable light were made the subjects of their keenest sarcasm and their most insulting wit. It was about the third hour of the night. The king's heart was merry with wine. A thousand of Judah's nobles, with their wives, their sons, and their daughters, sat at the banquet-table. A voice, deep and solemn as the grave, was heard below, as if in the garden, in the rear of the palace, crying, "Woe unto Jehoiakim, King of Judah! Woe! Woe! to the Holy City!" The sound was of an unearthly nature. The assembly heard it—the king heard it. For a moment, all was still. Again the same deep minor sound was clearly heard: "Woe unto Jehoiakim, King of Judah! Woe! Woe unto the Holy City!"

"Seize the accursed wretch!" rang through the great apartment.

The king's countenance was flushed with anger, while he cried, "Who is this vile dog that dares insult the King of Judah? Let the abominable thing be dragged into my presence and then receive his instant doom!"

A thorough search was made for the mysterious author of their confusion—guards and sentinels ran to and fro. Every corner of the enclosures was thoroughly examined, but all in vain. No trace could be found of the unwelcome herald. After a short interval, the agitation measurably subsided; and the company was soon found in the midst of wild revelry and merriment. The king endeavored to be merry; but the peculiar deep tone of that messenger of woe still sounded in his ears; and, with all his efforts, he could not forget it. In the midst of his depravity and wickedness, he still at times had some dread of that God whom he daily insulted. He sought to drown his unpleasant thoughts in mixed wines, but the King of Judah felt a dark presentiment of some awful calamity near at hand. With desperation he struggled against it, and joined in the boisterous laugh and merry song.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH THE READER FINDS HIMSELF IN GOOD SOCIETY.

In the vicinity of the Temple stood a beautifully erected mansion. From outward appearances the stranger would learn that the inmates of that fair fabric were not common personages. There was no ostentatious show of worthless and unmeaning grandeur about the premises. Nothing to betray the least weakness of mind or vain taste; but all so appropriately and consistently beautiful, and so intelligently grand, that all strangers, in passing by, for a while would pause to gaze at and admire the fair building, with its beautiful enclosures.

Into a richly-furnished room, of broad and lofty dimensions, within this fair edifice, we will now introduce the reader. The light shone brilliantly from a richly-ornamented silver candlestick, suspended from the centre of the high ceiling. There were present on this occasion seven persons. In one corner sat a man of venerable appearance, some-

what advanced in years. His silvery hair was parted gracefully, and fell in rich abundance on his shoulders. His beard was long, and well arranged. His eye dark, large, and somewhat sunken. His look solemn and grave; but not a feature betrayed the least disagreeableness. Through his gravity might be seen calmness and serenity; through his gentleness, courage and decision of character. He looked wearied and careworn, and had the appearance of a man of sorrow. His right elbow rested on a table by which he sat, and his head leaned on his open hand. In another part sat an elderly lady, richly, but modestly, attired in dark habiliments. Calm dignity and self-possession rested on her countenance; and although traces of tears were visible on her cheek, a pleasant smile played on her lip. On each side of this person sat a young damsel, beautiful and fair; the rose on their cheek, and the red on their lip. Their dark tresses fell in rich profusion on their snow-white necks and shoulders. They were alike attired, in rich simplicity and superb modesty. The remaining three were youths of noble exterior, tall and well proportioned; attired in princely elegance. A degree of excitement was visible on their countenances. In silence, with something of a hurried step, they continued to pace the length of the room. At times the fire kindled in

their eye, and the flush rose on their cheek. Again a scornful smile played on their lips. Suddenly the elderly person rose to his feet, and, with deep feeling, exclaimed:

"O the iniquity of Jerusalem! The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond! Jehoiakim's transgressions have towered to the heavens. He has cruelly persecuted the prophets of Jehovah, and he has burned the sacred roll in the fire. Does he not, in the pride of his wicked heart, say, 'Who is the Lord?' Ah! Jehoiakim, King of Judah! The dark day is close at hand! Thy nightly revellings shall be turned into midnight howlings; thy drunken songs into wild lamentations of woe. The heavy tramp of the war-horse is heard on the distant plain! O that my head were waters! and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the stain of the daughter of my people!" And, turning to the elderly lady, he still continued: "Fear not, O Josepha! Put thy trust in the arm of Jehovah; and in the dark and evil day thy family shall be covered by his protecting wing. The God of Israel shall not overlook thy tender regards for his persecuted prophet. The city shall be taken—blood shall flow, and many of Judah's proudest sons shall perish by the sword; but God will remember the

house of Josepha, and none of its inmates shall be reckoned with the dead."

"Peace and God's favor be thy portion, O man of God!" answered Josepha. "Never do we feel happier than when Jeremiah the Prophet is under our roof. Thou wast the early friend of my deceased husband, who now looks down upon us from Abraham's bosom. He was taken away from the evil to come. Thou wast with him in his last moments. It was thy hand that wiped the cold sweat of death from his dying brow. Like thyself, his heart bled in view of the wickedness of Judah. My children were deprived of the godly admonition and watchful care of a pious father when they were mostly needed. But they have found a spiritual father in our well beloved prophet. Through obedience to thy godly instructions they turn away with pleasure from the giddy throng, and flee the vicinities of popular vices. My son and daughters have undoubtedly brought upon them the sore displeasure of the king's family by absenting themselves this night from the ungodly gathering at the palace. But thanks to Jehovah, my children have no pleasure in those assemblies where the God of their fathers is forgotten, and his testimonies trampled under foot. Better suffer the displeasure of Jehoiakim, than the frowns of the King of kings.

Heaven bless my dear children, and may He hide them under his wing in the approaching storm!"

"Dearest of mothers!" cried Sharona, with affectionate earnestness, "happy, indeed, are thy daughters in the sweet consciousness of having endeavored to walk in the paths of wisdom, and thereby adding some drops of consolation to the bitter cup of a most precious mother. Let us all confide in that arm that parted the sea. Be assured, dear mother, that as our happiness is thine, so thy happiness is ours. In thus speaking, I speak but the warm feelings of this, my young sister Tulah."

"True, dear Sharona!" cried young Tulah, with tears in her eyes. "Thou hast spoken but the warm sentiments of thy sister's heart. We will cling together, we will love one another, and cheer the heart of our good mother in every affliction. Our good Prophet says that the enemy is approaching the Holy City! My heart throbs! But God is the refuge of his saints. God save the youths of Judah who shall stand for the defence of Jerusalem! Heaven protect my brother in the day of battle—and my cousins ——" Here the young damsel, overwhelmed with emotions, stopped, covered her face with her hands, and dropped her head on the bosom of her mother.

"Be calm, dear Tulah!" cried one of the young

men, with a voice calm, yet firm. "The Lord He reigneth in heaven above and on earth beneath. The destinies of empires are in His hands. He hurls down potentates from their height of pomp and pride, and causes His enemies to lick the dust. He is the God of our fathers; and when, in fear, they trembled between Pihahiroth and Baalzephon, He opened to them a way of escape. The angry waves of the Red Sea were parted, and in triumph they reached the other shore. At His command both the charioteer and horse were cast into a deep sleep. He led His people, like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. But Israel, from the days of their fathers, have been a rebellious people. They provoke the anger of Heaven, and defy the vengeance of Omnipotence. The history of our kings, from Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, to Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, the present proud and wicked king, that continues to disgrace the throne of Judah, with but few exceptions, has been that of violence and blood. The patience of Jehovah is well-nigh exhausted. Judah must be scourged for her iniquity. The day of darkness and tribulation is near at hand. Let Jehovah, in His infinite wisdom, select His own measures for the purifying of the nation. But let the proud Chaldeans know that Jerusalem shall not surrender without a struggle! Judah shall yet

flourish, when their enemies shall be destroyed. Courage then, comrades! Let Jehoiakim know that drunken revellers are not the best soldiers; and while others shall prove faint-hearted, let Hananiah, Meshael, Azariah, and Daniel be found at their post!"

During the delivery of this address the patriotic young Hebrew became somewhat excited. His fair cheeks colored with emotion, as he grasped the hilt of his sword. His companions stood by him, shared his enthusiasm, and cried: "Side by side we will stand together in the day of battle!"

The mother smiled, Sharona smiled, and young Tulah wiped her tears and smiled.

The man of God now arose from his seat. His countenance was marked with deep solemnity. He groaned in the spirit. He spoke: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me. Once more Jehoiakim, King of Judah, must hear a message from the Lord. I will face him in the midst of his revellings, and in the presence of his drunken nobles. This hour let him learn his fate. The blessing of the Highest shall rest on all the inmates of the house of Josepha." And with this, Jeremiah the Prophet hastened from the apartment.

CHAPTER III.

AN ORATOR WHO HAS NO REGARD FOR THE "HIGHER LAW."

HIGHER and higher ran the excitement of the banquet-room. Loud peals of laughter broke forth from the merry throng. Musical instruments poured forth rich strains of melody. Jehoiakim was loudly complimented on every hand, but the law of God was ridiculed. The music ceased—the laughter was over; the vast assembly was brought to a degree of order. Jehoiakim sat on a magnificent throne, gilded over with pure gold. A large number of war officers sat near him. A royal herald passed through the throng, crying, "Listen to the oration of Sherakim! Listen to the oration of Sherakim!" Soon silence was obtained, and Sherakim the Orator stood before the vast concourse, and began:

"Princes and Nobles of Judah! With merry hearts, we assemble from different parts of the kingdom to hail this festal day—the eleventh anniversary of the reign of our illustrious sovereign. Ye

will not think it strange, nor consider it affectation, when I assure you that I actually tremble beneath the weight of honor conferred upon me at this time. My remarks will be brief. I shall endeavor to confine them to the memorable object that called this happy company together.

"The death of King Josiah, as ye well know, threw a partial gloom over Judah. Not because all of us considered his measures expedient and prudent, but because he was our king, and undoubtedly honest in his intentions, amid all his imperfections. Let the infirmities and mistakes of past monarchs be buried in their graves. We are not here to mourn over the past, but rather to rejoice in the present. We are here assembled to congratulate one another on the unprecedented happiness that flows to the nation, from the reign of the truly illustrious sovereign that now adorns and beautifies the throne of Judah. The faults and deficiencies of other-day kings are more than made up to the nation in the bright reign of the most excellent Jehoiakim. We do not expect that even the superior administration of our matchless monarch will suit the tastes and desires of weak-minded and superstitious men. The King of Judah, with all his superior powers, is not capable of satisfying the unreasonable demands of those deluded creatures who are yet too numerous

in our midst. Have we not sorrows enough common to man in every-day life, without hanging down our heads and brooding over imaginary sorrows in the future? What good can result to any one from spending half his time in yonder Temple, and there going through a long list of senseless ceremonies, with sad and melancholy looks? Princes and Nobles of Judah! We rejoice together under the happy reign of a king who looks at those things with calm disdain, and smiles at the foolishness and darkness of other ages. Let us, therefore, banish gloom and enjoy life. Let deluded visionaries bow their heads, disfigure their countenances, and utter their plaintive moans; but let *men* stand erect, with joyful countenances and merry hearts! They tell us that Jerusalem is in danger; and they dwell with solemn emphasis on what they please to call "forgetfulness of God." They tell us that the Chaldeans are about to besiege the city, and take it! This old story will answer well to terrify shallow brains and young children; but, with men of sense, it will receive that silent contempt which it deserves. Let the citizens of Judah give themselves no uneasiness on this point, from the silly harangues of a wild and deluded fanatic who is a more fit subject to be confined with unruly lunatics, than to be heeded as a teller of future events. However, I would not

advise severity towards the followers of old Jeremiah. They are rather to be pitied than blamed. As long as they keep their delusion within their own circles, we shall let them alone; but let them be careful that they step not too far, and disturb the happiness and enjoyment of others. Among themselves, let them talk about the "Law of their God," to their hearts' content; but as for us, we know of no *higher law* than the law of our king—the edicts of our grand sovereign. To him, and him alone, we pledge our undivided fidelity. Trusting in the King of Judah, we cheerfully go forward, and bid defiance to every foe. In conclusion, I have only to say, Long live Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah!"

"Long live Jehoiakim!" echoed throughout the assembly. The king bowed and smiled, and Sherakim the Orator's countenance gave evidence that he considered his efforts as crowned with success. All was again hilarity and mirth. The wine passed freely around. Shouts of laughter rang through the spacious hall. A strange person entered the apartment, at that end opposite to the spot where the king sat on his golden throne! His singular appearance arrested the attention of all present. The stranger had passed the meridian of life. His figure tall, his countenance striking, his eyes dark and somewhat sunken. His beard grey and hung gracefully on his breast. Deep solemnity rested on his visage, which

presented a very strange contrast to the countenances that surrounded him. With a slow but firm step, he walked through the long passage and stood in the presence of Jehoiakim, King of Judah.

The vast assembly was soon hushed to silence, and spell-bound from curiosity. Sherakim the Orator gazed on the king. The king, with an angry brow gazed on the stranger. The stranger, in return, cast a withering glance on the king, and stood in his presence with form erect and fearless. He lifted his hand on high, and thus addressed the monarch:

"Hear the word of the Lord, O King of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David. Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work. Shalt thou reign because thou closest thyself in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink and do justice, and was it not well with him? He judged the cause of the poor, and then it was well with him. 'Was not this to know me?' saith the Lord. But thine eye and thy heart are not but for thy covetousness, for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression and for violence. Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, 'He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.'"

The stranger turned his back on Jehoiakim, and

with the same slow firm step, he marched through; and although the king in a rage gave orders for his arrest, there was none to lift a finger against the man of God. He was gone! and the assembly was left gazing in mute astonishment at one another. Such was the unearthly aspect of that mysterious stranger, that even the great flow of spirit was not proof against its effects. The deep tones of his mournful predictions reached their ears and even their hearts. In spite of their abominations and infidelity, they felt that there was a divinity in that awful voice of warning, and for a short period, at least, their hearts throbbed with guilty emotions of fear. Many a proud daughter of Judah trembled and turned pale, as she gazed on the solemn visage of the uninvited stranger, and as she listened to the deep-toned eloquence that fell from his lips. Others there were who felt a strange throbbing of heart, but each one vied with his fellow to hide his real feelings; and soon, by an unholy bravado, the concourse fell back to their usual hilarity, marked by more than an ordinary degree of unholy wit, and blasphemous sarcasm. Revelrous mirth was perfectly restored, and flattering compliments were poured in great abundance on the vain ears of Jehoiakim, King of Judah. But some few there were even there, who had not entirely forgotten that there was a God on high who ruled in the affairs of mortals.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH A POLITICIAN IS SEVERELY REBUKED.

In that part of the banquet hall, remotest from the king, were seen two young persons, who, in their deportment, gave very evident signs that they were far from being happy. While others gave very signal demonstrations of mirth, they, on the contrary, gave strong tokens of dissatisfaction and regret. They were youthful in their appearance, attired in rich simplicity, and were evidently of high rank. The young man was tall, and of noble bearing; his large dark eye ever and anon flashed fire; while on his lip played a singular kind of smile, bordering on disdain, which he evidently strove to hide. The young damsel that leaned on his arm was somewhat younger in years. She bore a strong resemblance to her companion, and from the working of her features, it was clear that their feelings and sympathies were near akin. They promenaded together, and carried on their conversation in a low key.

"Oh, brother! to think of the wild blasphemy of Sherakim, and the way his wild harangue was received by the audience, is horrible beyond description! Happy had it been for us if we had followed the example of our brothers and cousins, and had remained at our quiet dwelling. My heart is sick within me! My spirit faints! I long to leave this unholy throng."

"I know, sister, there is nothing here to give *thee* pleasure, or interest thy pure mind. I well knew this when, in the innocency of thy spirit, thou didst signify a desire to be present. I consented to accompany thee, not because I had any expectation of being pleased, or that thou wouldst be pleased, but from a simple desire of gratifying thy wish. However, I am not sorry to be present. I have had an ample opportunity to look into the dark depth of the abominable depravity that abounds in the high places of Judah. My heart, sister, as well as thine, throbbed with burning indignation at the insolent language of that thrice contemptible Sherakim. I have known him for years to be a time-serving, deceitful demagogue. Shade of my Uncle Josiah! I could have rushed on the stage and run him through! The miserable, cowardly knave, thus to insult the memory of God's anointed! How the unprincipled flatterer turned pale in the presence of

the man of God, whom, but half an hour before, he had denounced as a madman! Ah, my sister! we are on the threshold of some terrible calamity! Jehoiakim King of Judah, must be arrested in his mad career! The patience of Jehovah is well-nigh exhausted, and the dark day is close at hand. The word of the Lord, through the mouth of His prophets, must be accomplished. Well, let it come: courage, my sister! Let us trust in the arm of that Jehovah, whose name is dishonored by this ungodly throng."

"Was it not marvellous, brother, when we consider the deep-rooted enmity that exists toward the man of God, that no one laid on him a violent hand? He calmly walked through their midst without the least molestation!"

"The life of the Prophet is carefully watched by the God of Israel, and his safety among his enemies to-night can only be attributed to the direct interference of Jehovah. Sawest thou not how they raged when he was out of their reach? Long live the Prophet Jeremiah! Let his——"

"Hush, my dear brother! not so loud! We are surrounded by his most malicious enemies; and a word in his favor, in a place like this, may lead to serious consequences! Be calm, my dear Azariah!"

"Good advice, as usual, from my sweet sister; I'll endeavor to profit thereby."

This conversation was interrupted by the near approach of Sherakim. This personage, as the reader already knows, was very lightly esteemed by Azariah. Of this the prince was well aware, and, in return, hated the young man with perfect hatred; but his malice was invariably hid under a bland smile. Sherakim had worked himself into the favor of the king, through his abundant and perpetual flattery. He was a weak-minded man, but had some considerable speaking power. Azariah was a youth of superior abilities, and of an illustrious family; and the king's flatterer was not blind to the fact that he strictly adhered to the service of the Temple, and the worship of the God of Israel, and therefore could not be friendly to the sceptical administration of Jehoiakim. Sherakim was destitute of moral principle—proud and self-conceited. His real admirers at the court were few. What popularity he had was chiefly owing to his being a favorite of the king; and the king's degeneracy and disregard of holy things were, in a great measure, attributable to his influence. They had been comrades together in revelry before Jehoiakim took the throne, and the same relation still continued. The orator was aware of the presence of Azariah, when

he delivered his oration, and he now inwardly exulted to find that his thrusts had reached their proper destination. With his usual smile, he approached and bowed. The salute was coldly returned by the young man.

"I hope ye find the festivities of the night exceedingly pleasant."

"If we do not, it must be evident we are an exception to the rest of the company."

"We were annoyed by rather a strange visitor; I trust thy fair sister was not alarmed."

"We are seldom alarmed by the familiar voice of a friend."

"Ah, indeed! then ye are accustomed to the old man's eloquence."

"We are often highly delighted and instructed by his superior teachings."

"Delightful! Perhaps his fine oration suited well your tastes?"

"Thou rightly judgest; and surely thou wilt not envy us *one* oration suitable to our taste."

"Your youthful hearts undoubtedly have been deeply affected. It is well that ye are so susceptible of impression."

"If a very sudden change of countenance, to a deadly paleness, is an index to the feelings, our youthful hearts were not as deeply affected as some older ones, on the right from the king."

"The vile dog ought to be put to death; and I should be glad to consign to the same fate all who have any sympathy for him."

"The man of God is out of your cruel reach; but one who deeply sympathizes with him stands now in close proximity to Sherakim the orator," said the young man, with a cold sneer on his lip.

"All hail! Then I have the honor of standing in the presence of one of the disciples of Jeremiah!"

"And I have the dishonor of speaking with the guilty vilifier of the illustrious dead—of King Josiah, my worthy uncle, whose name thou art not worthy to take within thy deceitful, polluted lips. The name of King Josiah shall be held in veneration in Judah, when the names of his guilty slanderers shall be a stench in the nostrils of the community."

"Irreverent dog! thy barking is vain. Thy pride shall be humbled. The king shall be made acquainted with thy treasonable propensity, and thou shalt pay dearly for thine insolence!"

"Go! and do thy worst; I ask not thy favors—I fear not thy frowns. Thy guilty career will soon be run. The God whom thou insultest will soon cause His enemies to lick the dust."

"I fear not thy God! I am subject to no higher law than the law of Jehoiakim, King of Judah,

whose power thou defiest." And with flushed cheeks and compressed lips, which clearly indicated anticipated vengeance, the orator hurried to the other end of the apartment.

Now that Sherakim was gone, Perreeza cried, "O brother, brother! away from this awful place! This moment let us start! Forgive me, O forgive me, dear brother, for being the means of leading thee to all this trouble."

"Give thyself no uneasiness, dearest sister," replied the brother, fondly kissing her; "it may be all for the best—at least, it gives me much pleasure to let that proud knave know that I am not ashamed nor afraid to vindicate the character of the man of God, even in the midst of his enemies."

"But, dear brother, hast thou not endangered thy life by thy great boldness?"

"No, sister! Jehoiakim dared to burn the sacred roll, and he dares to do many wicked acts; but there are a number of young men of the royal line that he dares not molest. He well knows that in an hour of danger, or in a case of invasion, one of these is worth a thousand Sherakims; and if he were to lay a violent hand on any of these, it would create such a commotion in the army as would shake his tottering throne to pieces. But, dear

Perreeza, at thy request I will leave this very moment."

Without ceremony they left the giddy throng, pursued their way quietly through the winding streets, and reached their habitation in safety.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH TWO SPEECHES ARE BROUGHT TO A VERY SUDDEN CLOSE.

The night was far advanced, and there were indications that the great festival was drawing to a close. The last great feature expected was an address from the king. The hour appointed had arrived, and expectation ran high, but Jehoiakim made not his appearance. At last Sherakim appeared before the vast audience, and commenced an apology for the absence of the monarch in the following strain:

"Princes and Nobles of Judah! It is with heartfelt regret that I am compelled to convey to you the painful intelligence that our illustrious sovereign, owing to severe indisposition, will not be able to deliver the royal address. This no one can regret more than your unworthy servant. Is it any wonder that——"

Just at this time, the king himself, with a flushed countenance and a very unsteady step, appeared on the stage. It was glaringly evi-

dent to all that were not in the same condition themselves, that the King of Judah was altogether incompetent for that important branch of business which, in despite of the kind remonstrances of his personal friends, he was determined to undertake.

The reader is already aware that the king had been twice disturbed by the dark predictions of the persecuted Jeremiah. In the attempt to throw off his embarrassment, and appear courageous before his friends, he sought relief in mixed wines, of which he partook without restraint. These, in a measure, proved successful to stupefy his guilty conscience, but they greatly added to his vanity and self-conceit. Long before the hour arrived for the delivery of the royal address, the King of Judah's conversation amounted to nothing more than drunken gabbling.

A number of his most influential courtiers endeavored, with all their tact and ingenuity, to dissuade their sovereign from the attempt, urging, that the excitement of the night had already so prostrated him, that it would be unsafe for his health to enter again into the uproar of the festive hall. Now, Sherakim had come to the conclusion that their arguments had finally prevailed, and that the king had been comfortably removed to his bed-chamber. Hence his remarks, which were cut short by the sudden appearance of the king. Jehoiakim, without

any ceremony, commanded the orator to fall back; which command was instantly obeyed. Instead of ascending the throne, as usual, he took the stand that had been vacated by Sherakim, waved his hand, and loudly laughed; while the audience loudly cheered; then, with violent gestures and faltering tongue, he went on—

"Princes and Nobles of Judah! I am here! I tell you I am here! Am I not Jehoiakim, King of Judah? Is not this the glorious reign of my anniversary? Where is the villain that dares to say it is not? Then that is a settled question. I hear no contradiction. Who dares contradict? I hear no reply. Princes and Judah of Nobles! Yea, ye are here together to anniversary the celebrate of your king. Who is afraid of the King of Babylon? If ye know of such an one, bring the cowardly dog to me, and I will take off his head—Ha! ha! ha! Old Jeremiah! Where is the vile dog? Ah, I'll soon put him out of the way. Judahs and Nobles of Princes! Can there be any danger while the King of Babylon is fighting with the King of Egypt? Will he trouble Pharaoh-Necho while he is fighting Jehoi—— I say, will he march an army from Jer——

"Princes of Nobles and Judah! I perceive ye understand your sovereign. We are all safe! He dethroned me three years ago—Ha! ha! ha! Will he

do it again? Shall I pay him any more tribute money? Never! I defy his powers! Princes and Judahs of Nobles! I have enemies in Jerusalem! They are friendly to that old lunatic. They desire my fall! I hate them! I curse them! I'll destroy them! I'll put an end to their Temple-worship! I care not for any of them, nor the God they serve! To-morrow blood shall flow! Hear it, ye nobles! To-morrow will be a bloody day in Jerusalem, and the enemies of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, will learn——"

The heavy blasts of trumpets were now distinctly heard without, which arrested the king in his drunken blasphemy. A number of officers suddenly rose to their feet; when a young officer in uniform rushed into the banquet-hall, and cried at the top of his voice—"To arms! To arms! To arms, O Judah! The legions of the Chaldeans are approaching the Holy City! To arms! To arms! To arms!" and the officer rushed again into the street. The confusion that ensued was indescribable. Officers ran to and fro in wild haste. Wives and daughters wailed, lamented, and clung to their husbands and fathers in the utmost dismay. Hilarity and mirth were turned into sorrow and bitter lamentations of woe. Those proud and lofty arches that so lately rang to the sound of the merry song and boisterous laugh, now answer to the distracted cry of the fair daugh-

ters of Judah. Thus, in "confusion worse confounded," broke up the great festival of the *last* anniversary of the reign of Jehoiakim, King of Judah.

The dawn of day presented to the inhabitants of Jerusalem their true and lamentable condition. A portion of the Chaldean army was already encamped on the plains before the city, and near by the remaining legions were on a rapid march for the same spot. This sudden appearance of the forces of Nebuchadnezzar before the walls of Jerusalem, was owing to the King of Judah's refusing to pay the tribute money as agreed on another occasion.

Three years before, the same king, who then jointly reigned with his father, brought his forces before the city; and without any resistance they thought fit to surrender. Jehoiakim was still permitted to reign, but subjected to be a tributary to the King of Babylon. For two years this agreement was adhered to by the King of Judah. On the third, the King of Babylon marched his forces into Egypt, to bring into subjection the revolting inhabitants, whom he had conquered a few years previous. Jehoiakim, trusting that the Egyptians would be able to stand their ground, and, peradventure, prove victorious, thought this a favorable period to throw off the Chaldean yoke; and consequently, scornfully refused to pay the tribute-money, and treated the Chaldean ambassador with haughti-

ness and utter disregard. But, contrary to the expectations of the King of Judah, the Egyptians, when they beheld the powerful legions of the Chaldeans, gave up their rebellion, and promised future allegiance to the King of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, enraged by the conduct of the King of Judah, ordered his forces in Egypt to march and encamp before the walls of Jerusalem.

Early on the morning of that fatal day, Jehoiakim called together a grand council, in order to deliberate on the best measures to be pursued in the painful emergency. Some advised a strenuous resistance; others said this would be vain; that the city was not able to stand a siege for one month—they were destitute of provisions, and, moreover, the army was in a very imperfect condition. The king thought it advisable to show no resistance, but treat the King of Babylon with civility. Finally, the grand council agreed that it was not expedient to resist the entrance of the King of Babylon, and concluded to throw open the gates of the city.

As yet the Chaldeans remained stationary, about thirty furlongs to the south. About the third hour they began to advance; their glittering arms, dazzling in the bright sunbeams, giving them a grand and imposing appearance. The walls of the city were thronged with anxious gazers, and all hearts

throbbed with deep and painful anxiety. Nearer and nearer they approached! The rumbling of their war chariots fell heavily on the ear. The heavy hoofs of their spirited chargers made the earth tremble. The loud blasts of their numerous trumpeters were carried on the wings of the wind, while the plaintive echoes answered from the lofty towers of ancient Salem. Hitherto the gates of the city remained closed. But onward the legions marched. Suddenly the massive gates were thrown open—then a grand shout from the whole army rent the air. For hours they poured in through the wide portals, and once more the gods of the Gentiles were escorted in triumph through the wide thoroughfares of the "City of the Great King."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ANCHOR WITHIN THE VAIL.

While the idolatrous Chaldeans were exulting in their good fortune, and while the guilty enemies of Jehovah's worship trembled with fear, those who had proved faithful to the law of Jehovah were comparatively calm, in the midst of their deep calamity. They had the sweet consolation derived from a consciousness of having led a spotless life, in the midst of universal degeneracy and apostasy from the faith and worship of their fathers. They were not, like their enemies, taken by surprise. They regarded their prophet as the true oracle of God, and placed implicit confidence in his word and doctrine. Jeremiah was instructed through holy inspiration, that the present state of things was well nigh closed; and that the days of Jehoiakim were few—that the Chaldeans ere long would take the city, and that torrents of blood would flow in Jerusalem. This state of things was looked for by

the sincere worshippers of Jehovah. They firmly confided in their divine teacher, trusted in the arm of Omnipotence, and calmly waited the result.

The house of Josepha was always open to all the true worshippers of the God of Israel. For some ten years this holy woman had been a widow. Her lamented husband was of the kingly line, a brother of King Josiah; a man of deep moral worth, a genuine worshipper of the true God. To the deep sorrow and regret of thousands, Baramon was suddenly gathered to his fathers, in the first year of the reign of Jehoiakim, King of Judah. He left a beloved companion, with three children, in the possession of abundance of wealth; and on his dying bed gave them faithful admonitions to remain unshaken in the true faith of their fathers, and commended them to the care of God, and the spiritual teachings of his holy Prophet. From the death of Baramon the house of Josepha had proved a delightful retreat to the man of God. Thither he would bend his weary footsteps, and there he always found a welcome home. The children, from the days of their infancy, had been peculiarly attached to him. Young Daniel would listen to his interesting Hebrew stories with the greatest attention, and with peculiar emotions of delight. Young Sharona would, with welcome smiles, run to meet him; and Tulah

would sit on his knee, and repeat, from memory, some interesting passages of the Temple's ritual. Thus, from peculiar early circumstances, they were taught to regard the man of God as their spiritual father and adviser.

When Jeremiah left the banquet hall, after having delivered his solemn message from the Lord, which contained the awful death sentence of the King of Judah, he proceeded, solemnly and quietly, to the house of his kind friend and benefactress. There we now find him, surrounded by a large circle, who hang on his lips with that attention which the peculiar occasion alone could command.

"The day of darkness is upon us," cried the Prophet. "The city of God is in the hands of the heathen. The gods of the Gentiles are already within the walls of Jehovah's Temple. The uncircumcised Chaldeans are revelling on sacred grounds! They exultingly cry, 'Ha! ha!' at the downfall of Judah! They blaspheme the name of our God, and desecrate His holy Sabbaths. This calamity is brought upon us through Jehoiakim's sin, and the iniquity of his counsellors. They have despised the way of the Lord. They have not hearkened unto His voice. The cup of their wrath is filled, and sudden vengeance shall sweep them away. Oh that they had hearkened to the voice of warning! Oh that they

had learned wisdom from the law of Jehovah! Then peace and joy would have triumphed throughout our borders. But to-day repentance comes too late! Jehoiakim must fall. The persecutors of God's anointed must be punished. The revilers of sacred things must be brought low. The destroyers of the sacred roll must be brought to an account. Let the lovers of Zion be calm; and let them, in deep humility, bow to the requirements of Jehovah. If, in his wisdom, he sends us away to Babylon, his purposes are all in mercy, and in the end will be glorious. These precious youths of Judah now before me would willingly fight, bleed, and die in the service of their nation. Do I not see the fire in their eye? This is right and praiseworthy; but on this occasion Jehovah does not require this at your hand. Your lives are too precious to be sacrificed in an useless struggle. Ye have done your duty, and God is well pleased with your service. And now, seeing that the city is in the power of the enemy, keep aloof from the scenes of strife; for blood shall flow before the setting of the sun."

"Has it come to this," said Daniel, "that Judah's warriors must remain quiet, while these enemies of Jehovah are parading in pomp and pride through our thoroughfares, and desecrating our holy places of worship? For my part, I can hardly abstain

from elevating the standard of Judah, and rallying the thousands of Jerusalem for a general conflict. But let the King of kings direct; let His holy Prophet command, and let it be my province to obey."

"Wisely said, precious youth," answered the Prophet. "The Lord, He is king of nations, and all His faithful subjects delight to render obedience to all his wise directions."

"Precious brother!" cried young Tulah, "thou wilt certainly not leave us. These Chaldeans are a wicked people, but we shall feel safe while our good Prophet and brother are near at hand to protect us."

"Be it so, sweet Tulah," answered the brother. "I shall ask no greater honor or pleasure than to be permitted to administer comfort and happiness to those that I so dearly love and admire."

"Heaven bless my dear son!" cried the mother. "Thou hast been our stay and consolation in many a trial. The ways of Providence are mysterious. His footsteps are in the sea, and His paths in deep waters. The Lord He is God—let Him do as seemeth Him good."

"Dearest of mothers!" cried Sharona. "We will cling together, and nothing shall separate us. We will be happy in the enjoyment of one another's society. We will delight in one another's love. I

know of no earthly felicity equal to that derived from loving a dear mother, and being loved in return. Jehovah, dear mother, is the strength of all His saints, and in Him will we trust."

"Abundantly is thy mother rewarded for all her troubles in being surrounded by such dear, affectionate and obedient children, who walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful."

"May they never be guilty of adding a pang to the best of hearts!" replied Daniel, brushing away a fugitive tear.

"Heaven smile on the house of Josepha!" cried the Prophet, with much feeling. "Jehovah protect it with His power, and overshadow it with His wing."

A knock was heard at the door, and a servant ushered into the apartment a young man of a very comely appearance, who, if we might judge from the smiling countenances of the inmates on his entrance, was an universal favorite. He gracefully saluted the company, and showed peculiar regard for the Lord's Prophet; while the man of God, in return, sweetly smiled and pronounced a blessing on his youthful head. The young man's countenance denoted a degree of mental excitement.

"Thrice welcome to our circle, dear cousin," cried

Daniel. "I trust Cousin Perreeza is in good health. Sad things have fallen upon God's heritage. The uncircumcised heathen are revelling within our gates and desecrating our holy places."

"A sad calamity, truly! To us it came not unlooked for. To others it came not uncalled for. The high places of Judah abound with violence and deceit. Drunkenness, blasphemy and atheism parade together, within royal enclosures. The God of heaven is daily insulted by those in high authority. The Temple of God is made a subject of ridicule. The followers of Jehovah are laughed to scorn. The Prophet of the Highest is classed among lunatics and madmen. The iniquities of Judah put heathen abomination to the blush. Our rulers are extortioners—our king a drunkard. In no city of the Gentiles can be found stronger enemies to the Lord Jehovah than among the inhabitants of the Holy City. The cup of our iniquity is full, and I fear Jerusalem must drink it to the very dregs!"

"The God of our fathers will smile propitiously upon his young servant Azariah, whose words are those of wisdom and understanding," said the Prophet. "Thou well sayest, my son, that iniquity abounds in the high places of Judah. The reign of Jehoiakim has been one continual scene of iniquity and crime. The dark day of vengeance has arrived.

May God remember His covenant with His faithful few!"

"Jehoiakim's anticipated pleasure of putting to death the followers of Jeremiah has at least been postponed by the sudden interference of the King of Babylon," answered young Azariah. "Last night, the royal address was heavily surcharged with awful denunciations against the faithful. It breathed terrible vengeance against Temple-worshippers, and especially against their illustrious leader. I was informed that this was the day for the execution of the sentence. On this day, blood was to flow in Jerusalem. But while his guilty tongue stammered forth its drunken blasphemy, the cry 'To arms!' brought his wild harangue to a sudden termination; and to-day he has other business to occupy his mind."

"Ah! his prophecy in regard to the shedding of blood may yet be too true," said the Prophet, "but not that innocent blood which would so well please his taste. The King of Judah, together with his guilty flatterers, will yet learn that vengeance belongeth to God."

"The courage of Sherakim has ere this found its level," said the youth, with a smile. "A mighty champion—a powerful hero he, in festive halls, among dainty dishes and flowing goblets. I venture the

assertion, that to-day his whereabouts is not known. Sawest thou not, O man of God, how the base slanderer of the illustrious dead trembled and turned pale in thy presence, yesternight?"

"And yet he took not warning, but ridiculed the message from Jehovah, and mocked the God of Heaven."

"A guiltier wretch is not to be found in all Judah—a curse to the city, and a dishonor to the nation. But, holy father, what course shall we pursue, in case of a rising of the people against the Chaldeans, of which there is a strong indication? Shall we join in with the enraged and unorganized populace, or shall we keep aloof? We are ready to execute the will of Jehovah, as made known to us by the mouth of His holy Prophet."

"The will of Heaven, my son, is that all His faithful followers be shielded from all violence and harm; therefore, let them remain quiet within their dwellings, while the storm rages without. Thy young comrades, here, have already been instructed. And now, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, as ye reverence the word of the Lord, refrain from all rash movements. Let God dictate and let man obey."

"Even so, amen!" cried together the youths of Judah. "Let God dictate and let man obey."

"Hark ye! What meaneth that shout?" cried young Tulah, running to her brother's side. "Didst thou not hear?"

"Peace! peace! my dear sister," calmly replied the brother. "It was but the boisterous laugh of the Chaldean soldiers, who are thronging our streets, and congratulating one another on their bloodless victory."

"Nay, brother, surely it was from a scene of conflict!" replied the damsel, with trembling. "Hark ye, again! 'tis approaching! O man of God, are we safe?"

"Safe under the shadow of the Almighty," replied the Prophet, in a clear, fearless, distinct tone. "At thy side a thousand shall fall, but it shall not come nigh to thee; only with thine eye shalt thou see, and behold the end of the wicked. Hark! Hear ye not the clashing of deadly weapons? The drunken prophecy of the King of Judah is being fulfilled; and blood already flows in torrents down our streets. Let the faithful ones of Judah be calm. This is the day when God's vengeance shall fall on many of Judah's guilty apostates, and turn their anticipated cruelty to God's anointed back upon their own heads."

While the Prophet spoke these words, the tumult without waxed louder and louder, and it was evident

that it approached nearer and nearer. As by some unconscious spell, all within that spacious apartment found themselves on their feet; and deep anxiety was visible on every countenance. A number of the men went up into another apartment, from which they had a clear view of all transpiring in the street below. There the scene was truly terrific. Carnage and slaughter was visible as far as the eye could see. Apparently without any order of battle, and in the greatest confusion, an awful work of destruction was going on. Each one with desperation rushed on his antagonist, with a wild shout of revenge. The dead and dying were scattered in all directions and trampled under foot, in the general rush. Both Jews and Chaldeans rolled in their agony and blood. The wild thrilling cries of the combatants rent the skies, and echoed mournfully from the distant turrets. Thus the furious combat progressed, and the streets of Judah's capital presented a scene of deep and dark desolation. But it was an unequal contest. The legions of the Chaldeans came pouring in from every quarter, and gradually the men of Judah were compelled to flee from the struggle and secrete themselves in their various hiding-places. The din and uproar gradually subsided, and open hostilities for the present were at an end.

"Let us all bow in humility before the Lord of

Hosts," said the Prophet, "and acknowledge His goodness, and implore His loving kindness."

In willing obedience to the voice of their leader, the assembly bowed the knee together in the presence of Jehovah, while the Prophet opened his mouth in solemn prayer.

"O thou hope of Israel! Thou wilt shield our heads in the day of battle! Surely, under the shadow of Thy wings shall we rejoice. Thou art justly angry with the transgressions of Judah. The loud iniquities of Jerusalem have reached Thine ears, and Thou hast come forth from Thy hiding-place in sore vengeance. O remember Thy covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and let not Judah utterly perish! In the midst of wrath, O remember mercy! Let not one of Thy faithful ones perish by the hand of the stranger. Let these, Thy servants and handmaidens, who are now bowed before Thee, find favor in Thy sight. Let them not fall with the workers of iniquity, nor be left to the will of their enemies. In the dark and tempestuous day, hide them within Thy pavilion. Let the house of Josepha be under Thy smiles. Deal gently with this family, according to the abundance of its favors to Thy persecuted Prophet, and their undivided zeal for the worship of their God. We are Thy children, O God of Jacob! We have loved Thy law—we have

walked in Thy statutes. We have been the objects of ridicule to those in high authority. Rulers and magistrates have laughed us to scorn; but in Thee we trust both now and for ever. Let Thy loving kindness be our inheritance. Let Thy smiles be our portion. Let the approbation of Jehovah be our great reward. Prepare us for all the calamities that may befall. Give us patience, under all affliction, until every storm be passed."

CHAPTER VII.

WINE IS A MOCKER—STRONG DRINK IS RAGING.

The King of Judah's treatment of the Chaldean ambassador, in regard to the tribute money, had so exasperated the King of Babylon, that he was determined to chasten his audacity with rigor. This monarch, at this period of his reign, was of rather a mild disposition, but like his sires before him, a love of conquest had become with him a strong passion. Three years before, he had dealt with much mildness toward the inhabitants of Jerusalem. On taking the city, he charged his soldiers to show no indignity to the inhabitants, under the severest penalty—which charge was well heeded. Towards Jehoiakim he also evinced a kind disposition. With but few restrictions, he was permitted to reign. Now that Jehoiakim (as he thought) had abused these acts of kindness, and had violated solemn obligations, and had betrayed sacred trusts, and, in addition to all this, had publicly ridiculed his ambassador, his indignation was kindled to a flame.

The King of Judah on this occasion, as well as on all other occasions of embarrassment and perplexity, sought relief in mixed wines. These stimulated his courage for the time being, which, being left to its own resources, was of a low order; but under the effects of these deceitful liquids, he became truly heroic; and all that could not agree with him in this particular, were ranked among cowards.

"Jared!" said Jehoiakim, "where is that Sherakim that was so full of fight at the banquet hall last night?"

"As my soul liveth, O king, I know not his whereabouts. I have not seen him since early dawn; and then he appeared to be in haste, and was in no mood for conversation."

"A curse on his cowardly head! I suppose these Chaldeans have put his valor to flight. Jared! how many armed men within the royal enclosures?"

"Two hundred of the royal guard, O king, are present—all armed and ready to face death for their illustrious sovereign."

"It is well!" said Jehoiakim, filling his bowl. "Ha, ha, ha! Let the King of Babylon beware of my vengeance? What does the fool desire? The King of Judah is not to be frightened. Jared! where is Sherakim?"

"Sherakim, O king, is not to be found."

"Ah! I had forgotten. Sherakim not to be found! Ha, ha, ha! Sherakim not to be found! The cowardly babbler. Jared, command more wine! Sherakim has fled—he is afraid of a shadow—he has not the courage of a maiden. Have I not known him of old? Did not a thunder-storm always make him cry? Ha, ha, ha! Sherakim the orator! fool! coward!"

"A messenger, O king, from the King of the Chaldeans, desires to be introduced into thy presence. Shall I conduct him to the apartment?"

"Is he alone or accompanied?"

"Accompanied by armed men."

"Let the messenger be admitted, but let the guard remain behind."

The messenger was accordingly ushered into the presence of Jehoiakim.

"And what business of importance has brought thee into the presence of the King of Judah?" asked Jehoiakim, with a curled lip.

"I stand in thy presence as a bearer of a message from my sovereign master, King of Babylon."

"Methinks I have seen thee on another occasion."

"And was not my behavior honorable and becoming?"

"Did the King of Judah say otherwise?"

"Yea, otherwise."

"How?"

"By his vile and haughty treatment of the king's ambassador."

"Be sparing with thine insolence, or at this time thou mayest fare far worse."

"The Chaldean ambassador is not to be frightened by idle threats from one who lives at the mercy of his master."

"Thinkest thou thyself safe because thou art surrounded with a few soldiers? Knowest thou not that within my call there are hundreds of armed men, ready at any moment to execute my will?

"And knowest thou not that Jerusalem is in the hands of the Chaldeans, and that three score thousand men of war are stationed in the city?"

"Three score thousand! But come, sir, what is the message of the King of Babylon to the King of Judah? Let thy words be few."

"Then thou art commanded, without delay, to appear in my master's presence, and there learn his sovereign will concerning thyself and the city."

"*Commanded!* Ha, ha, ha! Go thy way, and inform thy master that if he desires to see Jehoiakim, King of Judah, he must call at the royal palace, where he may have his desires gratified."

"Then I go. Faithfully will I convey thy answer to my illustrious sovereign."

The minister hastened from the royal palace, to convey to the king the result of the interview, while the King of Judah, waxing more desperate, still applied himself to his cups. Alas, thou doomed potentate! Happy would it have been for thee if thou hadst followed in the footsteps of thy pious father! Happy wouldst thou have been if thou hadst hearkened to the solemn voice of warning—bowed before Jehovah in penitent humility, and hadst implored the forgiveness of the King of kings. But, instead of this, thou hast forsaken the ways of the Lord. Thou hast ridiculed divine things, chosen the enemies of God for thy counsellors, and abused thy father's personal friends. Thou hast oppressed and robbed the poor, in order to revel in extravagance and debauchery. Thou hast thirsted for the blood of God's prophets. Thou hast burned the sacred roll, and thou hast defiled the power of the Highest. Thou hast converted the Holy City into a den of wickedness and a sink of moral pollution. Thou hast set the wicked in authority, and promoted those that tempt God. Thy palace nightly resounds with guilty revellings, and then the laws of Jehovah are daily trampled under foot. The dark day of retribution has at last arrived, and thou shalt learn, when too late, that the way of the transgressor is hard."

The King of Babylon, on his arrival in Jerusalem,

ordered his magnificent royal tent to be pitched in the centre of a large square in the very heart of the city. The great body of the army was stationed in another part—the royal guard remaining near the royal tent. From this spot went forth the summons to the King of Judah to appear in the presence of the King of Babylon.

"Where is his Royal Highness, the King of Judah?" asked Nebuchadnezzar.

"In his palace, O king, indulging in excess of wine, apparently perfectly at ease."

"Is he not forthcoming?" asked the king, with a darkened brow.

"He laughs to scorn thy commands, O king! and wishes to inform thee that if thou hast aught to communicate that he may be consulted at his palace."

"By all the gods, the fellow is mad!" cried Nebuchadnezzar in a passion. "I'll have to bend his stubborn will—yea, I *shall* do it. I thirst not for his blood; but let the guilty monarch beware how he trifles with my commands! Balphoras! haste thee back with a double guard, and inform Jehoiakim that my orders are not to be trifled with; and moreover, that if he persists in his stubbornness, I shall send sufficient force to drag him into my presence as a guilty culprit."

The communication was in perfect accordance

with the desires and expectations of the Chaldean officer. Balphoras was in possession of an amiable mind, respectful and decorous to his superiors—kind and gentle to his inferiors. Wherever he was known among his countrymen he was universally beloved. His treatment at the hands of the King of Judah, from the beginning, had been haughty, abusive, and overbearing; all of which he had borne with extraordinary patience and calm dignity. However, he was not insensible to injury or indifferent to abuse. He deeply felt; but had learned to be a greater conqueror than his master, inasmuch as he that governeth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city. Balphoras, without being unkind or selfish, desired to witness the humiliation of the King of Judah. He was well advised of his guilty history. He was well acquainted with his early profligacy, his unhallowed indulgences, his excesses by day, and his midnight revellings; and being himself a man of truly respectable and temperate habits, such conduct in high places was by him looked upon with perfect contempt; and he very rightly judged that it was high time for the guilty monarch to be hurled down from his wicked pomp and guilty pride. The command of his king, therefore, was put in immediate execution, and the Chaldean minister, accompanied by a strong and imposing guard, once more was on

his way to demand admission into the presence of the King of Judah.

"Jared! Well would I have served those guilty dogs, if I had given orders to have their heads taken off. What sayest thou, Jared?"

"They richly deserved it, O king," answered Jared, with his face in another direction, on which played a suppressed smile.

"Let them beware how they insult the King of Judah! Jared! hast thou learned aught of Sherakim's whereabouts?"

"Naught, O king."

"Ungrateful dog! Cowardly fool! Miserable brawler!—Sherakim! Bah! Jared, order more wine. Who should Jehoiakim fear? Jared! what trouble in the porch? Haste thee and see."

Jared hastened to obey the commands of his drunken sovereign, and presently returned.

"The same messenger from the King of the Chaldeans demands an interview with the King of Judah."

"Let him be admitted. Ha! ha! What next?"

Balphoras, with a firm, dignified step, walked into the presence of Jehoiakim, who, in spite of his wine-propped courage, almost trembled beneath the Chaldean's penetrating glance.

"And what hast thou to communicate at this time?"

"My communication is short and decisive."

"Shorter the better—let it be delivered."

"My illustrious sovereign, the King of Babylon, wishes the King of Judah to understand, that his commands are not to be trifled with; and, moreover, that if the King of Judah persists in his stubbornness, he must be dragged into his presence as a guilty culprit."

"Who dares to utter such words in my presence?" cried Jehoiakim, in a rage.

"The Chaldean minister, as the words of his illustrious sovereign."

"Go and tell thine 'illustrious sovereign' that Jehoiakim spits upon his insolent demands."

"Thy raving is in vain. Better far to bridle thy rage and comply. Be it known to the King of Judah, that I have three hundred chosen men of war at my bidding, who wait for the word of command. What is the choice of the King of Judah?"

"Be it known to thee, insolent fool," cried the exasperated king, "that Jehoiakim laughs to scorn thy threats, and spurns thy counsels."

"Alas, for thine obstinacy, proud and reckless man!" answered Balphoras, as he left the apartment; "thy doom is sealed!"

After the departure of the Chaldean, Jehoiakim gave orders to his officers to be ready, at all hazards, to defend the royal enclosures against all further intrusion from the Chaldeans. Moreover, he delivered before them a wild and passionate harangue, after which he applied himself with desperate defiance to his wine cups.

"A curse upon his guilty head! Ha, ha! 'Dragged into his presence,' eh! Never! Fools! Villains! Let them beware of Jehoiakim's vengeance."

While the King of Judah thus indulged in his wild delirium, a strong detachment of the Chaldean army was on a rapid march towards the royal palace, with orders to make a prisoner of Jehoiakim, and bring him into the presence of the King of Babylon. They soon reached the king's gate, and demanded admittance; which demand was promptly and haughtily refused. This was but the signal for attack, and a furious combat followed. Both the Chaldeans and Jehoiakim's men fought valiantly. The passage was defended with extreme bravery and valor; but after a most desperate struggle, the Chaldeans proved successful in forcing an entrance. The sentry at the palace door was soon overcome, and a company of Chaldeans rushed into the royal mansion; and, after some search, they found the king. Without ceremony he was dragged from his hiding-place, and

ejected from his palace. A shout of triumph broke from the Chaldeans, which only exasperated their antagonists. Another desperate rush was made for the rescue of their king, but it proved unavailing. He was conducted to the open street amid a general fight. The din of battle brought together vast multitudes, and seeing their king a captive, added greatly to the strength of Judah's forces; and the Chaldeans found themselves continually attacked from unexpected quarters. Thus the conflict waxed hotter and hotter as the Chaldeans desperately fought their way through the exasperated men of Judah.

The reader will readily identify this account with that sanguinary engagement mentioned in another chapter, and witnessed by the disciples of Jeremiah from an upper room, at the house of Josepha.

The King of Judah was carried into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, and had he, even then, humbled himself, he might have escaped an awful doom. "Whom the gods purpose to destroy they first infatuate." The behavior of Jehoiakim in the presence of the Chaldean monarch was the behavior of an enraged madman. To every inquiry he replied in the most insulting and abusive epithets; and to seal his own doom, he madly rushed on the King of Babylon with his sword, and had it not been that this potentate was on his particular guard, it would

have proved fatal. This was beyond the reach of endurance. Nebuchadnezzar, stung to the quick, grasped his sword, commanded his officers to stand aloof, and faced his enraged foe. They made a few passes, and the sword of the Chaldean was plunged deep into the heart of the King of Judah.

"Take the ungrateful dog," said the excited Babylonian, "and drag his worthless carcass, and throw it outside the city walls."

The command was immediately put in execution.

Thus perished the wicked king, according to the word of the Lord, by the mouth of his servant Jeremiah.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAD NEWS AND DARK HOURS.

The city was now placed under the most vigilant watch. Large bodies of armed men were stationed at different points; Jerusalem was formally proclaimed to be in the possession of the Chaldeans, and the inhabitants were put under close restrictions. The King of Babylon made all haste to bring matters to a degree of form and order. In the first place he ordered a grand national council, into which the princes and nobles of Judah were called. Here he appeared, in person, and in the presence of the men of Judah, took a review of past events; and discoursed, with an evident degree of feeling, on the treacherous and faithless conduct of Jehoiakim, towards whom he had dealt with such mildness and favor in days gone by. He, moreover, explained to them the circumstances under which Jehoiakim came to his end, and justified himself by stating, that he merely stood on the defensive. He had always treated the men of Judah with much

respect, and would so continue, although the mad conduct of their king would justify the destruction of the city, and their universal captivity. He would still protect them as a nation, and give them all liberty in their multiform pecularities. Trusting they would learn wisdom from the follies of the past, he sincerely hoped they would not abuse his clemency or betray a solemn trust. He then pronounced Jeconiah king in Jerusalem, in the place of Jehoiakim, his father. This pleased the men of Judah exceedingly; for none of them presumed to hope for such favorable overtures. Shouts of gladness filled the vast apartment, as the King of Babylon ended his remarks; and all the men of Judah clustered round the youthful Jeconiah, and hailed him as their king. The grand council was at an end, and, amid shouts and exultations, the King of Judah was escorted to his royal palace. Jeconiah, like unto his father before him, was still a tributary to the King of Babylon; the yearly sum being now somewhat increased.

Nebuchadnezzar having fully accomplished his purposes, for the time being, in regard to Judah, gave orders to make hasty preparations for the evacuation of the city, and for a speedy march for the plains of Chaldea. But he would not return without some visible evidence of his conquest. On

this he was fully bent. The King of Babylon, although at this time far from being the vainest of mortals, like many in high places in his day, as well as our own, often made a very liberal display of egotism and vanity. He was determined that he would convey to Babylon, from Jerusalem, a certain number of unblemished young men, of high birth, and of the royal lineage. In regard to these, he consulted Jeconiah, who, at this time, gladly acquiesced in any wish of the King of Babylon. The King of Judah being well acquainted with all the youths of royal blood, gave a list of a number of them to his grand master. First on the list appeared the name of Daniel, then followed the names of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The King of Judah and his counsellors embraced this as a golden opportunity to banish from their midst those whose presence was anything but a source of happiness to them, and whose holy lives and acts of devotion, from day to day, were a stern rebuke to their profligacy and infidelity. So pleased were they with this movement that they gladly encouraged the King of Babylon to carry away anything his fancy desired, and sacrilegiously intimated to him about the vessels of the House of the Lord, part of which he carried to the house of his god, in the land of Shinar.

Intelligence was soon conveyed to the youths of Judah, that on an appointed day they would be required to accompany the Chaldeans to their own land.

Josepha, with her two daughters, were seated together in one of their commodious apartments. Since the occupation of the city by the Chaldeans, it was not oft that they were thus left; but the soldiers having hitherto behaved with such perfect decorum, no great fear on the part of the inhabitants was felt; and the mother and daughters for a short interval were left together.

"Thinkest thou not, dear mother," inquired Sharona, "that they delay their coming? Lo, it is the eleventh hour. I hope no harm has befallen them."

"Be calm, dear daughter," sweetly replied the mother. "No harm shall befall thy brother—the kind providence of the God of Abraham shall protect his faithful few. Hitherto we have trusted in the arm of Jehovah, and we are safe. Daniel and thy cousins will soon return, and I trust the man of God will see fit to accompany them."

"O, I sincerely hope he will!" exclaimed Tulah. "I always feel happy while the good Prophet is under our roof. How I love to hear him speak of the 'Law of the Lord.'"

"Thy mother is glad, dear Tulah, that the law of Jehovah has charms for thy youthful mind. May it always prove the rule of thy conduct, a light for thy path, and a lamp for thy feet. Happy would it have been for Judah if, instead of delighting in wickedness, it had delighted in the law of the Lord."

"Let us hope," said Sharona, "that the dreadful fate of Jehoiakim, together with many of his flatterers, may prove a warning to those that are again set up in authority—that they follow not in the footsteps of their guilty predecessors.

"We shall hope for the best, my daughter; but we must hope with fear and trembling. Jeconiah is a wild and rash youth, and illy adapted for the grave responsibility of his high station. From his childhood up he has known nothing of wholesome restraint, and I greatly fear that he will prove anything but a blessing in Judah. Of one thing we are sure—he has no regard for the worship of Jehovah, or anything that pertains to the service of the Temple; and, consequently, the friends of Jeremiah must be far from being favorites. But the smile of the King of kings will amply compensate all his loyal subjects for all the frowns they may suffer in vindicating his holy cause."

Voices were now heard in the porch, and, presently, Daniel, the Man of God, and the three

brothers entered into the apartment. The mother and daughters, with smiling countenance, arose to give them a cordial welcome.

"Home again, dear brother!" said Tulah, running to his side; "The time seemed long, indeed. We were somewhat uneasy about thee; but, thanks to Jehovah, all is well, and our good Prophet was so kind as to accompany thee; and here are cousins—oh, is not this a happy time!"

"Unhappiness is almost impossible where the voice of sister Tulah is heard," replied Daniel, with much feeling.

"But methinks a shade of sorrow rests on thy brow, my son. Art thou troubled by any ill tidings?"

"Mother," replied the youth, with trembling accents, "from the days of my childhood I have been instructed to put implicit confidence in Divine Providence, and, although at times the workings of that Providence has been quite mysterious, it has been enough for me to know that Jehovah is too wise to err. We cannot now comprehend the whole circumference of God's movements; but hereafter these gloomy providences will shine forth in all the splendor of their wise and merciful *design*. My ways are in the hands of Jehovah! My confidence in the God of heaven is unshaken! I am prepared

for any and all emergencies. Life or death, ease or pain, prosperity or adversity, friends or foes, acquaintances or strangers, Judah or Chaldea, Jerusalem or Babylon, I have consecrated my life to God. I am under holy vows! Let them never be broken or forgotten."

"But, my son," answered the mother, with a tremulous voice, while the sisters looked sad, "what are we to learn from these remarks? Fear not to impart any tidings to thy mother. Thou knowest that I am not a stranger to painful experience. I have often had to drink the bitter cup of sorrow. In all my afflictions have I not been wonderfully sustained? Withhold not, therefore, my son, from thy mother the cause of thy dejection."

"Most precious mother! Thou art always ready to bear more than thy share of trouble. Painful is it, indeed, to thy son to reveal any tidings that will add a pang to thy already afflicted heart. But painful as it is, it must be heard; and we shall bear its weight together. We are notified, myself and cousins, that, in a few more days, we must accompany the Chaldeans to Babylon. This order comes from the king; and, as we are wholly in his power, resistance would be vain. We were informed by the officers who brought us the painful intelligence, that no indignity will be offered us on pain of

death. Our rank and station will be well considered. We shall find favor in the eyes of the king. In seven days, and we shall leave the city. Let us bear under it with holy fortitude. Courage, my loving sisters! We shall yet see brighter days. The movements of Jehovah are all in wisdom. Let us be calm under his mysterious providences."

In revealing these unwelcome tidings the youthful Daniel summoned all his strength and energy, and, in a degree, succeeded in hiding his real feeling of a heart throbbing with intense emotion.

The mother was too full for utterance. Her lip quivered, and tears coursed down her cheeks. She strove in vain to hide her intense feelings. Her bosom heaved. The struggle was powerful. She was not strong enough to withstand the awful pressure; and even Josepha joined her daughters in loud weeping. This state of things was of short duration; soon they became more calm.

"Well, my son," said Josepha, "this is the severest trial of all; but the God we serve, and in whom we trust, will give us corresponding strength. Far be it from thy mother or sisters to speak a discouraging word to the best of sons, and the most affectionate of brothers."

"Blessed are they who speak words of wisdom," answered the man of God. "If Judah's sons are called away to the land of strangers, it is but to

accomplish a wise design of the Most High. The rebellion of Judah is not at an end. Jeconiah will follow in the footsteps of his guilty father; and his reign will be of short duration. In his day, the desolation of the city shall be great, and blessed are these youths of Judah who are permitted to escape the tribulation of those days. In all this let us behold the overruling hand of the King of kings."

After having bowed together before Jehovah in solemn worship, the party broke up; and the Prophet at this time accompanied the three brothers to their own habitation, where they were received with smiles of gladness by the lovely and beautiful Perreeza.

These three interesting youths, and their beloved sister, were the children of Amonober, a brother of Baramon, the husband of Josepha, and a brother of King Josiah. In the days of his youth he became acquainted with Monroah, the lovely daughter of the pious and good Salome. Salome had but three children—one son and two daughters. The son was of a lively temperament, and passionately fond of young company. He was easily led astray by those older in sin, and in the days of his youth he found himself under the necessity of fleeing from his native city to parts unknown, to escape the vigilance of the city authorities.

This was a sad blow to the Salome family.

Young Esrom, although wild, and sometimes reckless, had strong affections, and was greatly beloved by his sisters. The oldest daughter was a charming maid, but at the early age of nineteen she wasted away, and was hid in the cold grave. Monroah was left, and was the comfort of her widowed father; and at the age of twenty, she became the happy bride of Amonober. But the grief occasioned by the departure of her brother Esrom, and his supposed death, together with the death of her sister Serintha, laid in her feeble frame the foundation of that disease that called her to a comparatively early grave.

Amonober, like unto his royal brother, feared God, and departed from evil, and brought up his children in the ways of righteousness. Not long after the death of Baramon these holy children were deprived of both their parents through the agency of death, and thus while a portion of them were quite young, they were left on the boisterous sea of life to buffet the storms and waves as best they could. The godly instructions they had received in the morning of life, enabled them to commit their future destiny to the God who had promised to be a father to the fatherless; and in rendering strict obedience to the law of their God they had prospered, and were highly esteemed among the faithful.

They were constant worshippers at the Temple, and Jeremiah was looked upon by them with that regard due to the prophet of the Almighty. Perreeza was the great centre of their earthly bliss; and no pains were spared to render her life one of joy and tranquillity.

The love of the brothers was returned with all the strength and ardor of an only sister's deepest affection. The brothers' anxiety for themselves, when the sad intelligence of their future captivity broke upon their ears, was lost in their regard for their innocent and beloved Perreeza. What would become of their sister? was the predominant inquiry in every mind. Such was the state of their feelings when, with the pious Jeremiah, they arrived at their beautiful mansion; and that peculiar loving smile of their sister with which they were welcomed home, only added to their great distress of mind.

Perreeza was not slow to discern the visible change on those countenances, that were wont to be clothed with smiles.

"Sadness gathers on your brows, sweet brothers," said Perreeza, her keen eye glancing from one to another. "Where are those smiles with which ye are accustomed to gladden Perreeza's heart?"

"True smiles are the language of the soul, dearest

Perreeza," answered Mishael; "and if the heart is overwhelmed with grief, a smile on the countenance leads but to false impressions, which we have no desire to make on Perreeza's mind."

"Then," said Perreeza, with deep earnestness, "I am to understand that as smiles are a correct index to a merry heart, so the contrary is an index to a heart overwhelmed with sorrow."

"Thou rightly understandest me, sister."

"Alas! and is my brother's heart *so* sad? Hide not from Perreeza the cause of your grief! Let her have a part in your sorrow! Let her share in your troubles! Let her bear, at least, a portion of your burdens!"

"Alas, my sister! Thy brothers fear that thy portion of the burden is by far the heaviest; and it is on this account chiefly that thou readest on each brow the sadness of a brother's heart."

"O, brother!" cried Perreeza, with tearful eyes, "as thou cherishest the fond love of a sister, do not hide this calamity from Perreeza any longer. Let it be known, and fully known. Let me listen to its bitterest and darkest features! Will not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in whom I trust, whose law I love and obey, sustain me in this as in other dark afflictions past?"

"Jehovah, with His hand of love, will uphold

and sustain our dear Perreeza," cried Hananiah, volunteering his assistance to Mishael, who was well-nigh overcome by the words of his sister. "He is the God of our fathers. In Him we trust. We will not hide from Perreeza the cause of our sorrow. We have been notified, that, according to a decree of the King of Babylon, thy brothers and Cousin Daniel must leave Jerusalem, and accompany the Chaldeans to their own land. This is sad news, indeed. But it will be vain to repine. The decree is gone forth, and as we are wholly in the power of the King of Babylon, resistance will be worse than vain. The bitterest ingredient in this cup of sorrow, dearest Perreeza, is the thought of parting with thee! Hitherto thou hast been the centre of our joys; and the thought of leaving Perreeza is bitter beyond endurance. Seven days more, and we bid adieu to the land of Judah—the homes of our child"——

Here Hananiah, with all his efforts to the contrary, was compelled to make a sudden pause. How to account for it there were none at a loss. The two brothers shared in his feelings, and, indeed, the man of God was moved to tears. A short silence prevailed, which was broken up by the weeping accents of the distressed sister.

"O, brothers! brothers!" she cried, with her

hands firmly clasped together, "has it, indeed, come to this? Must ye be torn away from an only sister? O, Man of God! What will Perreeza do? My heart will break. O, my brothers! We cannot part," and she fell on the neck of Hananiah, and wept bitterly.

"We think it not strange, dear damsel," said the Prophet, "that thy young heart is made sad. Holier and stronger affections than which dwell in the hearts of the children of Amonober, were never known; and gloomy, indeed, at first sight, is that dispensation of Divine Providence that bids them part: but Jehovah, He is God, and from Him let mortals learn, in silence and humble submission. The things that are enshrouded in mystery to-day, will yet beam forth in wondrous wisdom. Darker days will yet break upon the city of the Great King, and happy are they who are permitted to escape the desolation that awaits the close of Jeconiah's reign."

"If to Babylon my brothers go, I must accompany them," said Perreeza, with much decision. "It *must* be so! Jerusalem will have no charms for Perreeza when those she loves dearer than life are far away!"

"Surely that would be our joy and desire," replied Azariah; "but, alas! I fear it will not be

granted. Kings are not easily turned from their purposes. The exact number is selected, and no females are marked on the captive list."

"But, dear brother, an effort must be put forth without any delay, to procure thy sister a permission."

"Yea, beloved! and an effort will be put forth with all readiness, and with the utmost perseverance."

This answer of the brother partly soothed the troubled spirit of the young damsel, and the suggestion on her part opened a little door of hope before the brothers, which they had not before seen.

CHAPTER IX.

"A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED."

DANIEL and the Amonober children, from their first interview with the officers of the King of Babylon, had left a very favorable impression on the minds of those high dignitaries; and although, in reality, they were but captives of war, they were treated with that high civility due to nobility and rank. This caused much astonishment to the youths themselves, and served in part to calm and reconcile them to their lot. The ardent desire of Perreeza to accompany them to the land of their captivity had been made the deep subject of their thoughts, and served if possible to deepen in their minds the already very deep fountain of pure affection.

Early next morning, the brothers bent their footsteps towards the temporary residence of one of Nebuchadnezzar's officers, with whom, at this time, they had to do. The manner in which they formerly had been received gave them some encouragement to hope that their mission would be crowned with

success. They soon reached the spot, and were admitted. With palpitating hearts, they were ushered into the presence of their superior, where they were received with marked attention.

"And what is the pleasure of these young noblemen of Judah?" asked Barzello, with a pleasant smile.

"Let thy young servants find favor in the sight of their kind and noble master," said Hananiah, "while with deep humility, they make known their request. The illustrious Barzello, we trust, will pardon us for this intrusion upon the time of the King of Babylon's noble officer, and listen patiently to their urgent prayer. Thy kind deportment towards thy servants, for these many days, have given them courage thus to stand in thy presence without any painful, distracted fears. We are the sons of Amonober, the brother of King Josiah, under whose reign, for many years, Judah smiled amid peace and plenty. Thy servants were early instructed in the religion of our sainted father; who, with our beloved mother, feared the God of Israel, and worshipped in his holy Temple. While thy servants were yet young, Amonober our father died, and was gathered to his fathers, and to-day he calmly rests by the side of his illustrious brother, King Josiah. Thus the best of mothers was left a widow with her fatherless

children. Thy servants, feeling it no less a pleasure than a duty, endeavored to comply with our father's dying request, by being ever kind to our beloved mother. Thus time passed away for two years, and our pathway once more seemed to be bright and pleasant, when suddenly our mother sickened, and after having suffered the dreadful pangs of disease for eight days, she fell asleep; and to-day, side by side, our beloved parents rest together in the burial-ground of their fathers. Be it known to the most excellent Barzello, that the children of Amonober are four—thy servants now before thee, and one at home, the youngest, a beloved only sister. She was the joy of her parents—the delight of their eyes; and bitter was the last struggle of a dying mother in leaving the innocent and lovely Perreeza; and sad, indeed, were the lamentations of the child, as she impressed the last kiss on the brow of the dying. Thy servants were called to stand by the side of her couch, a short time before she departed, and these were her parting words:

"'To you, my sons, I commit my sweet Perreeza! Let her youthful feet be tenderly watched by the eyes of love. Whisper words of sweet, brotherly affection in her youthful ears. O, deal gently and kindly with the dear, motherless lamb! Remember the dying request of a mother, and throw your arms of protection around your orphan sister.'

"Having concluded these words, our mother closed her eyes, and gave up the ghost. This beloved object of a mother's dying request has been, for many years, the centre of thy servants' joy and happiness, and one smile from our own Perreeza will often turn our darkness into day. Our love for her is returned with all the ardor of a sister's pure affection. The sad news of our destined departure from this our native land has well-nigh overwhelmed her heart with sorrow. The thoughts of parting make her spirit faint; and thy servants are sincere when they assure their compassionate master, that they greatly fear that, if compelled to be separated from her brothers, Perreeza will sink under the deep weight of sorrow, and pass away to the spirit land. In compliance with her very urgent request, thy servants at this time stand as petitioners before their benevolent superior. We are not here to ask to be released from any demand. We patiently yield to the stern necessity that calls us away; but we are here, O most excellent Barzello! to ask a favor for another, which, if granted, will always live in our grateful memories: it is, that Perreeza, our sister, be permitted to accompany us to the land of the Chaldeans. This is her earnest desire. If granted, it will make her happy. If denied, we fear that young Perreeza will soon be hid in the cold grave. Thy servants have made known their request to the

king's officer, praying that Perreeza may find favor in his sight, and that her request be granted."

Nations and people may greatly vary in their customs and practices, but we find that *genuine humanity*, wherever found, presents the same striking features. Barzello listened with much attention and apparent interest to the earnest plea of the young Hebrew. In reality, a far deeper impression was made upon the Chaldean's mind than he was then willing to manifest. Heretofore, the brothers stood high in his estimation; now they stood much higher; and although they were but captives, the Chaldean officer, in spite of some national prejudice, felt for them a regard bordering on affection.

"And how old is this your young sister, of whom ye speak in such terms of commendation?"

"Perreeza has but just commenced her seventeenth year."

"This request must be presented before my lord, the king. Call again at the setting of the sun, and ye shall learn his pleasure in this matter. Be assured, brothers, that my influence shall be exerted in your behalf."

"And the prayers of thy servants shall always ascend to the God of Judah for ten thousand blessings on the head of Barzello;" and in the most respectful manner, they left the apartment.

"The young men of Babylonia, who pride themselves so much on the superiority of their learning and their high attainments, might learn some precious lessons of wisdom from these youths of Judah. Separated? Nay! *These* children must not be separated. Par——, Per——, the name I have forgotten. Yea, she *may* go! and if she is what she is represented to be, she may be a companion for my own Jupheena—the dear one! And *she* also had a mother, once! Ah, yes! this damsel's noble request must be granted. The king will have no objection."

This short soliloquy fell from the lips of Barzello, immediately after the departure of the brothers, as with downcast looks, he paced the length of his apartment.

The brothers soon reached their home, when they found Perreeza ready to welcome them with a tranquil smile of love.

"Ye did not tarry long, brothers. Saw ye Barzello, of whom ye speak in such respectful terms?"

"We did, sister; and in nowise has he given us reason to change the favorable opinion which we had already formed of him."

"Found ye him ready to grant your request in regard to Perreeza?"

"To grant the request, it was not wholly in his

power; the permission must come from the king, to whom the kind-hearted Barzello will make application in behalf of Perreeza. His influence with the king is weighty; and thy brothers are very confident that their request will be granted."

"Praised be the God of Israel!" said the damsel, with much feeling, and covering her face with her hands. Recovering herself, suddenly she asked—

"But when shall the king's purpose be known?"

"This evening, at the setting of the sun, we are again to appear before Barzello, and there learn the sovereign will of the King of Babylon."

"Soon the sun will sink beyond the hills of the west," said the sister; "soon Perreeza will learn her future destiny. O, Lord of my Fathers! in Thee do I trust. The hearts of kings are in Thy hands. Consider thou my affliction, and send speedy deliverance."

* * * * *

"Barzello," said the King of Babylon, in a pleasant mood, "are my chosen captives in a ready trim for their departure?"

"All ready at the word of command, O king."

"But what thinkest thou of those brothers? Hast thou had an opportunity of testing their merits?"

"The brothers and cousins, O king, have been repeatedly in my presence, and have given me posi-

tive proof that they are youths of very superior abilities and great worth. Their amiable deportment and truly noble bearing, has left on my mind a very favorable impression. Indeed, the youths of Babylon, who pride themselves so much on their superior learning and high attainments, might learn precious lessons of wisdom from these very youths of Judah."

"By the gods! Barzello," said the king, laughing heartily, "if at this rate these youths continue to grow upon thy good opinion, before many days thou wilt be a convert to the religion of Judah!"

"Of the religion of Judah I know but little; but if these children are a fair specimen of its operations, I cannot think that there is anything very dangerous or offensive in it."

"Well, when we arrive in Chaldea, we shall give their powers a fair trial. But are there any more brothers in that family?"

"No more, O king," replied the officer, inwardly thanking the king for the question. "There are but three brothers and one young sister."

"She will be a comfort to her mother in the absence of her sons," said the king, in a thoughtful mood.

"But the young damsel has no mother. For many years the children have been both fatherless and motherless."

"Then there must be bitter parting there, Barzello! This young damsel, an only orphan sister, must be bound to her brothers by more than common ties."

"True, O king," answered Barzello, somewhat animated. "The thought of parting grieves them beyond description. It was but this morning that the brothers sought an interview with me on this very point, and pleaded in her behalf with such melting eloquence that well-nigh robbed me of all my generalship, leaving nothing but the *father*. I dismissed them by stating that I would lay their petition before my lord the king, and that I would give them his answer at the setting of the sun."

"Barzello!" said the king, in a firm tone, "I cannot change my purpose in regard to those brothers. Nothing shall prevail upon me to give them up. To Babylon they must go! I have spoken the word! Let there be no pleading in their behalf—I cannot grant their petition."

"I humbly beg my lord the king's forgiveness," replied the officer, with a smile; "but let me assure him that the noble youths have made no petition of that nature."

"But what *do* they ask?" asked the king, with some astonishment.

"They ask, O king, as the greatest favor, that

this their young orphan sister, be permitted by the king to accompany her brothers to the land of the Chaldeans."

"And has not this small favor been granted?"

"Barzello now stands in the presence of his sovereign in behalf of the Hebrew damsel, asking for her a permission."

"And the permission is granted. And furthermore, Barzello, see that she is well provided for, and dealt gently with, for the maiden is of kingly line."

"All this shall be strictly attended to, O king," said the well-pleased officer, as he respectfully left the presence of the monarch.

It was now late in the afternoon. The "regent of day" was gradually fading from the sight of the inhabitants of the valley, and was smilingly sinking beyond the western hills, and Barzello hastened his footsteps toward his head-quarters. After having reached his apartment, he seated himself, and indulged in some reflections, which, if we might judge from his countenance, we might pronounce to be of a pleasing nature. While thus musing, he was roused by the entrance of one of his servants.

"What now, Franzo?"

"Three young men and a damsel stand below, desiring the favor of an interview with my master."

"Let them be conducted into my presence; and see thou to it, that they receive due respect from all below. They are persons of distinction."

The sister and brothers were conducted into the presence of Barzello, where again they were received with peculiar attention.

"The officer of the king of the Chaldeans is always happy to meet his young friends, and will consider it a great pleasure to add to their comfort and happiness. And this young damsel, I am led to believe, is your sister of whom ye spake this morning."

"This is Perreeza, our sister," replied Azariah; "her sense of obligation to our noble friend for his generous feelings in her behalf, has prompted her to embrace the privilege of appearing in person, to acknowledge her deep gratitude."

"It gives me much pleasure to behold your sister, but I am not aware of any service rendered, that calls for any great amount of gratitude."

"Thy servants," said Azariah, "in compliance with the directions received this morning, are in thy presence, to learn the will of the king, in regard to thy servants' request, as made known to him through the intervention of his generous officer."

"Ye did well to come at the appointed hour. I am always well pleased with strict punctuality. I am happy to inform you, that your request in regard

to your sister is very readily granted; and, moreover, the king has given me particular directions to see that she has every thing requisite to her perfect comfort in journeying, which directions will be obeyed with the utmost pleasure."

Silent tears of grateful joy coursed down the cheeks of both sister and brothers. They were so affected by the result of their effort, together with the unaffected tenderness of Barzello, that for a short interval they could in no wise give utterance to their feelings. Perreeza was the first to break the spell. With eyes wet with tears, which made them but the more lovely, and with a smile made of all sweet accord on her lip, in a very modest way, she thus addressed the officer:

"The most excellent Barzello will please accept the humble thanks of an orphan maiden of Judah, for his kind regards. The God of the fatherless and motherless will surely reward his servant, and cause blessings and prosperity to rest on his household. Thy kindness shall not be forgotten. Our daily prayers shall ascend to the God of Judah, in thy behalf, with the smoke of our morning and evening sacrifices."

"And I trust the youthful maiden of Judah," said the officer, in a voice far from being firm, "will live to see many happy years in the fair land of the Chaldeans."

The interview was at an end, and the youths of Judah quietly directed their footsteps to that beautiful mansion, which was well known in that vicinity as the "House of Amonober."

CHAPTER X.

THE SAD PARTING OF FRIENDS.

A LARGE number of the faithful visited daily the house of Josepha, to mingle their kind sympathies with that deeply-afflicted family. A deep gloom rested on the minds of the real worshippers of Jehovah, in view of the departure of a number of their most influential and promising young men. Other captives there were, but they were of those who cared but little for the service of the Temple, and with whom at present we have but little to do. Josepha, with her two daughters, bore their affliction with becoming dignity, and with calm resignation to the will of God. Daniel continued cheerful, and exerted all his energies for the comfort of his mother and sisters, whom he well knew stood in need of all the consolation that could possibly be administered. Both families were in constant communication with each other, and whatever of moment occurred in one house, was soon understood at the other. The troubled minds of the mother and

daughters, were in a degree calmed, in learning the kind civility with which Daniel and his cousins were received by the king's officers. The Prophet Jeremiah also, by his timely visits and holy admonitions, contributed largely to dispel their gloom and assuage their fears. Above all, and aside from all *visible* instrumentalities and channels of communications, they derived direct support from that God into whose hands they had committed all their cares. They daily found, by a happy experience, that God was the refuge of all his saints, and that they that put their trust in Him would never be confounded. The Covenant made to Abraham, and subsequently renewed to Isaac and Jacob, and to Moses in the burning bush, was well understood and appreciated by the genuine few in Jerusalem, who had faithfully adhered to the service of the Temple in the midst of infidelity and general apostacy. On that Covenant they relied; and on the strength of it they could approach Jehovah with sanctified courage and holy boldness. The Lord had pledged himself to be their God, as long as they walked in His ordinances, and departed not from His precepts. Such was their confidence in that pledge, that in every gloom it was to them a source of joy; in every affliction, a theme of consolation; in every storm and tempest, a sure covering and a safe shelter.

"Behind a frowning Providence,
They saw a smiling face."

They trusted in Jehovah as a Covenant God, and in all their trials they rejoiced in His righteousness, and firmly believed that every dark dispensation was controlled by an infinitely wise hand, for the full accomplishment of some grand and lofty design.

At lengh the day arrived for the youths of Judah to bid adieu to their native hills, and be conveyed to a land of strangers. Never a morning broke fairer on the great metropolis of Judah, than that which witnessed that sad parting of friends; and Nature presented a strange contrast to the tempest that raged within many a heart, and the thick clouds of darkness that brooded over many a mind. The sun rose in majestic splendor in a cloudless sky, while feathered songsters hailed his appearance in concerts of the sweetest melody. The Chaldean army, under the command of its numerous generals and their officers, made hasty preparations to march out of the city. The arrangements on the part of Daniel and his cousins were already perfected, under the wise directions of the Man of God. Through the permission and direction of the King of Babylon, the brothers had disposed of their possession in the city without sacrifice, and were permitted to retain the proceeds.

At noon, they were to leave the city. For some two or three days the brothers and Perreeza had been inmates of the house of their aunt. Early on that morning, Josepha sought an interview with her son. What she had to communicate, she desired to do it where none would be present but herself and Daniel. She bade Sharona ask her brother to meet her in a certain apartment. The daughter complied, and soon the son stood in the presence of his mother. When he entered the apartment, the mother calmly arose and closed the door. Looking on the noble form of her son, she endeavored to speak, but failed, and fell on his neck, and found partial relief in a flood of tears. Her composure was soon restored, and after having asked her son to be seated, she sat by his side.

"Now, my son," said the mother, smiling, "I feel much relieved. Thy mother ought to have more courage; but we are weak mortals, and are soon overcome by affliction. The hour is close at hand when we must be separated. May the God of Abraham sustain his young servant in the trying moment!"

"And may the same God sustain my mother and sisters!" replied Daniel, with a firm voice.

"Thy mother has sought this interview, in order to give her son some parting advice, that may prove

precious to him when far from mother, friends, and home, in a foreign land."

"In the strength of Jehovah, I will endeavor to profit by every advice that may fall from the lips of an ever affectionate mother."

"To-day, my son, marks a new era in thy history. It is a period that will remain fresh in thy memory while life shall last. The day when Daniel bade adieu to the gates of Zion, shall by him never be forgotten. Thou hast always been an only beloved son of thy mother. Ever since the death of thy father, thou hast been the centre of our earthly joy; and on thee, my son, I looked with pleasure, as the prop on which to lean, if spared to see infirmity and old age. But, as the heavens are far above the earth, so His ways are far above our ways, and we must calmly submit to His wise appointments.

"In this hour, it yields strong consolation to thy mother, to remember that thou hast been early instructed in the law of Jehovah. Thou wast solemnly consecrated to God in the very morning of life; and ever since thy infant lips could lisp the name of the God of Israel, and thy infant mind could receive the simplest idea of our holy religion, thy training has not been neglected. Thy youthful mind was early instructed in the great truth that there is but one true and living God; the great Creator of

the heavens and the earth—the great Law-Giver of the universe. At the early age of five years, thou would'st sit on the knee of the Prophet, and there, from memory, repeat correctly the whole of the commandments received by Moses, the servant of God, on the Holy Mount. At the age of seven years, thou wast taken with severe sickness, and for a time we greatly feared that our boy would die. For many a weary week thy mother watched by the side of thy sick couch, to moisten thy parched lips and cool thy fevered brow; and many were the silent petitions that ascended from this bosom to the God of the Hebrews, for the recovery of my Daniel. The fervent sighs of an affectionate mother, in thy behalf, reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts, and thou wast spared. In thee I have always found a kind, affectionate, and obedient son. I look upon thee with a degree of pleasure bordering on pride. If aught that is unholy mingles with my pleasure, as I gaze on my noble boy, may the God of our Fathers forgive the iniquity of his handmaiden.

"In the death of King Josiah, Judah met with a severe loss, under which the nation groans until today. His sons followed not in the footsteps of their godly father; and from the day that Jehoiakim ascended the throne of Judah, the true worshippers of Jehovah have been called to mourn. Those whole-

some laws, established by the pious king, have been repealed by a reckless profligate, who feared not God nor regarded his ordinances. Innocent men have been put to death on trivial pretences. He publicly announced that the people should know no higher law than the law put forth by the King of Judah. But in the face of all his threatenings and denunciations, there where those in Jerusalem who openly and fearlessly adhered to the law of their God; which they considered a *higher law* than any enactment put forth by man. Among those who faithfully clung to the service of the Temple, thy mother and her three children have the pleasure of being numbered.

"Thou hast had, my son, but few of those that are called noble, for the companions of thy youth. The worship of Jehovah had no charms but for few of the rich of Judah. They care for no higher honor than what comes from the king—they care for no higher law than the law of Jehoiakim. The companions of my son, who feared God and departed from evil, were few, and mostly confined to the *poorer circles.*

"Thy mother has closely watched the workings of thy youthful mind; and great is her happiness in saying, that she never saw an inclination in her son to leave the covenant of Jehovah, and run with the multitude to do evil. Thou hast been lightly

esteemed by those in high authority, because thou hadst moral courage enough to obey God, rather than man. The disciples of Jeremiah have been pronounced fanatics, because they acknowledged a higher power than that of a wicked king, accompanied by a circle of ungodly counsellors. The faithful have been assailed by ruffians, because they dared to render obedience to the law of the Highest; and my son, together with his good cousins, have already received greater respect and tokens of regard from the uncircumcised Chaldeans, than they ever received from their relatives, the dignitaries of Judah.

"Now, my son, throughout this, thou hast come forth triumphantly. Thou hast not defiled thy garments with sin; thou hast had no compromise with the workers of iniquity. Thou hast not betrayed thy sacred trust; in this thou hast secured the good opinion of all those whose good opinions are worth securing; and above all, thou hast secured the favors and smiles of Him who sitteth on the throne of the universe; who is higher than the highest, King of kings, and Lord supreme over all lords.

"Thou art about to be moved into another country. The same integrity to the law of thy God will certainly secure thy prosperity among strangers. Thy path may occasionally be obstructed, but trust

in God, my son, and all will be well. The land whither thou goest is a land of universal idolatry, where the God of thy fathers is not known, and where the worship of the God of Israel may excite universal ridicule and contempt. Heed them not, my son! *With thy face toward Jerusalem*, let thy petitions daily ascend to the God of Abraham, and He will direct thy path. Never prove a traitor to the religion of thy fathers! My son will be obedient to the laws of his sovereign in all things that do not come in contact with his religion; but if ever thou art required to render obedience to any law that is contrary to the law of thy God, remember, my son, that *disobedience* to that law must be rendered, even unto death, if required. Let "Obedience to the Higher Law," be thy motto; for thy mother would sooner hear of thy death as a martyr to the religion of thy fathers, than of thy promotion to a throne through apostasy. The earnest prayers of a beloved mother and affectionate sisters, together with a noble band of faithful Israelites, shall, at morning and evening, ascend up to Jehovah in thy behalf; and my son will not forget to offer up his prayers for his friends and relatives in the land of Judah.

"But thy mother has too much prolonged the interview. Come, my son, let us join the company."

Slowly they went below, when they found the three brothers and Perreeza, the man of God and the two sisters, with a circle of their friends, who had come to witness their departure, and bid them a final adieu. A calm smile rested now on the countenance of Josepha. The bitterest pang with her was over. In the strength of Jehovah she had triumphed. Sharona and Tulah sat, one on each side of their Cousin Perreeza. The three endeavored to smile through their fast-falling tears. The four young men summoned a very commendable degree of courage, and, for the sake of others, they proved successful in checking those feelings that, like an obstructed freshet, stood ready to sweep everything before them. The words spoken were low and few. A peculiar solemnity pervaded the apartment. Each one trod lightly, as he would in the chamber of the dying; and from the frequent glances towards the man of God, it might have been readily gathered, that from him they expected to hear words of wisdom and consolation. The good man arose, his face beaming with more than usual radiance; a calm smile rested on his holy visage, while, with a smooth, melodious voice, he addressed the company.

"Men and women of Judah, it is no cause of wonderment that on this day your hearts are heavy, and your countenances sad. The parting of kin-

dred is bitter; but this is the inevitable lot of mortals, and true wisdom dictates calm submission. The movements of the Most High are all founded in perfect wisdom. His doings are infinitely above the comprehension of finite minds. The future alone can explain and unveil the beauty of His ways. To part with those we love is of small import, compared with the fulfillment of God's purposes, and the accomplishment of His grand designs. High on His eternal throne He sits, encompassed with glory and majesty. He is king of nations and Lord of all. Israel is His favorite, but He is not indifferent to the welfare of Gentile nations. His purposes are accomplished in Chaldea as well as in Judah. The patriarch Joseph was sent a captive to Egypt. Did not God overrule it to His glory? He found favor in the eyes of the king, and thus his kindred were provided for in after years. The youths of Judah are to be carried away to Babylon. They have already found favor in the eyes of the king; and their entrance into Chaldea will be but to prepare a home for others who will yet follow. Jehovah has not yet fully settled for the iniquity of Judah. There is righteous vengeance yet in reserve; but let not His people be dismayed; the Lord well knoweth who are His, and they shall not fall in the day of calamity.

These fair youths, if they well adhere to

the law of their God, shall be highly promoted in a land of strangers. Receive now, O young men of Judah, the parting admonition and final benediction of the man of God. Ye I have known from the days of your infancy. To my spiritual care ye were committed by the last words of dying parents. I have felt the responsibility of my solemn trust, and ye are witnesses, this day, that Jeremiah has not been indifferent to your spiritual interests. With the kind assistance of those parents, three of whom are now resting in the bosom of Abraham, I have endeavored to lead your youthful minds to love the law of Jehovah; and our united efforts in your behalf have been crowned with the blessings of the God of Jacob. We have had the great pleasure of witnessing your early devotion and youthful piety; and abundantly have we been rewarded for every effort put forth in your behalf. Beautiful in the sight of Jehovah and His holy angels are these youths of Judah, who turn away from the giddy rebellious throng, to walk in the ways of wisdom. Your temptations have been spread like snares at every corner. Your enemies have watched with cruel malice for your downfall; but they have watched in vain, and prophesied for nought. From all your trials ye have come forth with garments unspotted; and now, O, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael,

and Azariah, servants of the living God, let that decision of character, which has hitherto marked your history in the land of Judah, continue to be a prominent feature in your character, when far away in a land of strangers. Remember ye are under holy vows! Let your whole conduct show forth the beauty of your holy religion! The Chaldeans are an idolatrous people, and as ye are to mingle in their society, and be initiated into their customs, ye may be required to pay homage to their gods. In that case your duty is plain before you. Life is dear, but dearer than life, to the faithful Israelite, is the *law of his God!* Remember, that far before all human enactments, stands supreme the *higher law* of the King of kings. Let your deportment, as citizens, be unimpeachable and blameless; but, if required to bow before an idol god, or to cease your prayers to the God of Israel, let the impious requirement be met with that holy courage that will meet death rather than prove recreant to holy vows. But the God ye serve will open to you a way of escape from every trouble. Young Perreeza shall be under the peculiar protection of the God of her parents. Let her trust in His providence, and all will be well. Before we part, let us all bow the knee to the God of Abraham, and commend these precious youths to His peculiar care."

The company fell on their knees in solemn devotion, while the man of God spread out his hands in prayer.

"O, thou God of our fathers! in whom we trust, look in compassion on Thy servants and handmaidens now in Thy presence. We have loved Thy law better than riches. We have cherished Thy precepts in preference to honor. We have rendered obedience to Thy commandments in the midst of a rebellious generation. Thou art the consolation of Israel, and in all our afflictions we have been kindly supported. We bow before Thee, O Jehovah! We acknowledge Thy holy will. We ask Thy presence to accompany Thy young servants and young handmaiden to the land of the idolatrous Chaldeans. Give them holy courage to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord. May they find favor in the sight of the people, and may Jehovah be glorified through Thy servants. Be favorable to Thy faithful ones who tarry at Jerusalem; especially let the blessing of Jehovah rest on the house of Josepha. Let its inmates share largely in the benefits of Thy everlasting covenant. If according to Thy wise arrangement, permit them to meet again. If not, let Jehovah give them patience to bear all their severest trials. Give them strength for the parting scene; and when every storm and calamity is past,

gather up all Thy true Israelites to Thine upper sanctuary, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

The captives had been given to understand, that at a certain hour conveyance would be sent to the house of Josepha, to conduct them out of the city. That hour was close at hand, and each heart throbbed with intense emotions. The young men and the lovely Perreeza were all ready for their exile, and waiting for the dread moment with painful anxiety. At length the hour arrived. The rumbling of wheels was heard in front of the mansion, and presently one of the officials of the King of Babylon, in the most kind manner, informed them that he was at their service. Then came the *actual* parting! Embrace answered embrace! Tears mingled with tears! Affection clung to affection! The mother gazed, in tearful silence, on the countenance of her son, and pointed to heaven as the place of their next meeting! The sisters, with weeping, fell on the neck of a beloved only brother, with whom they had fondly played during the sunny hours of childhood, and who, in after years, had proved the centre of their joy! A young Tulah and a sweet Perreeza were found locked in each other's fond embrace! But it was soon past, and the young men tore themselves away—

"The parting scene was o'er,
The last sad look was given!"

The sorrowful farewell faintly died on the ear! They were gone! The youths of Judah were on their journey to the distant land, so far away from their happy childhood home!

CHAPTER XI.

WHERE A FAVORITE CHARACTER IS INTRODUCED.

In the journey to Babylon, nothing of note transpired. The royal captives continued to receive peculiar marks of attention, and very clear demonstrations of regard. They readily and justly concluded that all this originated in the generous heart of Barzello; and thus he became more and more endeared to the grateful hearts of the Hebrew youths.

The King of the Chaldeans' return to Babylon, at the head of his victorious army, was hailed with peals of applause and loud acclamations of joy. The great capital of his extensive empire was filled to overflowing with exulting thousands, to welcome the victorious monarch from a brilliant campaign. Proud banners floated in triumph on the high turrets, while a thousand minstrels filled the air with their high-sounding melody. The high arches of the queen of cities rang with merry shouts of triumph from an enthusiastic throng.

Nebuchadnezzar was as yet but a young monarch. He spared no pains to render himself acceptable to his people, by a worthy deportment and a liberal encouragement of all improvements throughout his vast realm, and especially within the city of Babylon. At this period, he was greatly beloved by his subjects, and his vast popularity was plainly visible in the unbounded welcome with which he was received into the city and escorted to the royal palace.

"O king, live for ever!" saluted his ears from voices almost without number, while the compliment was returned in the most graceful and dignified gestures, which more than satisfied his shouting admirers.

Not far from the vicinity of the king's palace stood a splendid mansion of broad and lofty dimensions. Within those enclosures, everything was arranged with faultless taste. In front, large beds of roses unveiled their charms, and sent forth their sweet fragrance. Each side was well ornamented with sweet shrubbery, and the rear beautified with a garden abundantly well filled with all delicious fruits. Order appeared to have the whole management of affairs. With the permission of the reader, we will now enter it. In a richly-furnished apartment within this noble edifice, sat a man of com-

manding exterior, attired in rich, military official costume. Caressingly on his bosom leaned a young damsel, over whose head sixteen summers might have gently rolled. Joy and gladness beamed in every feature of her lovely countenance, while ever and anon a kiss of affection was impressed on the brow of the person on whom she so familiarly leaned, which sweet token of love was promptly returned by a warm embrace.

"O happy day! Father is home again! Jupheena will now be happy. The time of thy absence seemed long and dreary; but thou art back again in our happy home!" and another kiss was left on the father's cheek.

"Yea, my child, I am really home again, and am happy to find my sweet Jupheena as well and as sprightly as ever."

"But my dear father has happily returned sooner than we expected: thy stay in Egypt was but short."

"Short, indeed, my daughter. Pharao-Necho, when he saw our numerous and powerful legions, soon came to terms of peace; and in this I admire his wisdom. From Egypt, we marched into the capital of Judah, and gained an entrance without resistance. However, in the city we found some trouble, owing to the fanatical conduct of their king.

His insolence was beyond measure; but at last the wretched profligate met the death which he so justly deserved. But I am forgetting myself. What does my innocent child care to hear about scenes of conflict and bloodshed!"

"Perhaps," said Jupheena, running her hand playfully through her father's shining locks, "that thou hast other things of interest to relate, that arrested thy attention in the land of Judah. O! I love to hear stories of other climes!"

"My stay in Jerusalem, thou knowest, was but short, and my facilities for observation were not very favorable; but owing to peculiar circumstances, I became partially acquainted with those in Judah who left deep and happy impressions on my mind. I found a few young men of the kingly line, who, in my opinion, were far superior in mind to any I ever had the pleasure of beholding."

"Dear father! that is saying much. Then they must have been very different from their royal relation, of whom thou speakest."

"Thou hast well said, my daughter. Happy would it have been for that distracted nation if one of those youths had graced the throne of Judah, instead of the profligate Jehoiakim."

"Then it appears, surely," said the daughter smilingly, "that true excellence and superiority are not

confined to Chaldea. But I hear nothing in praise of Judah's *maidens*."

"The maidens of Judah are fair—some of them exceedingly fair. Thou wilt wonder, perhaps, to hear that the peculiar grace and artless eloquence of one of these maids of Judah so affected thy father's heart, that he could not refrain from shedding tears."

"And will not my father let Jupheena hear all about her?"

"The circumstances are these, my daughter: The king decreed that he would convey to Babylon a number of young men of the kingly line; of these there were three brothers. When quite young, they were left fatherless and motherless. They had one sister—the youngest—whom the mother, with her dying words, committed to the kind protection and love of her three brothers. When the brothers heard that they were numbered among the captives, their hearts were very sad, chiefly on account of their young sister, from whom they would have to be separated. Slowly, and with fear, they revealed the sad news to this, the object of their affection. This well-nigh broke her heart, while with tears she cried out,

"'O, my brothers! if to Chaldea ye go, to Chaldea I must go also! for, to be separated is worse than death.'

"On this errand she sent her brothers to thy father, in order to gain permission for their sister to accompany them. The plea of the brothers was deeply affecting; so much so, that thy father found it extremely difficult to abstain from weeping in their very presence. I dismissed them, and promised to use my influence with the king for the granting of their request; and moreover, they were told to appear again at the setting of the sun, and learn his pleasure. At the appointed hour they again appeared, and at this time they were accompanied by their young sister, and thy father was glad to see her. She stood before me, the perfect image of modesty, virtue, and innocence. The damsel was lovely to behold; and when it was made known to her that she was permitted to accompany her brothers, her grateful emotions overpowered her. When able to give utterance to her feelings in words, she gently approached, and in a voice of melody, she said,

"'The most excellent Barzello will please accept the humble thanks of an orphan maid of Judah for his condescension and kind regard. The God of the fatherless and motherless will surely reward His servant, and cause blessings and prosperity to rest on his household. Thy kindness shall not be forgotten. Our daily prayers shall ascend to the

God of Judah in thy behalf, with the smoke of our morning and evening sacrifices.'

"Her words left such an impression on my mind that they are well remembered. Is it any wonder, my daughter, that thy father was deeply affected by these thrilling words of Judah's maid?"

The only answer from the officer's daughter was her sobs. She was deeply affected. The father, in his recital, had unconsciously touched a very tender chord in the bosom of his lovely Jupheena. Four years before, *she* also had stood by the bedside of a dying mother. Her father's words brought fresh to her mind that dying scene—the last sad look—the parting kiss; and her young heart throbbed, while tears fell thick and fast down her beautiful cheeks. Already she felt a strong attachment for the motherless maid of Judah. Her mind was gradually restored to a degree of composure, and her tears were wiped away.

"And have these interesting captives arrived in the city?"

"Yea, my daughter, they are already in Babylon."

"And shall not thy daughter have the pleasure of seeing this orphan maid of Judah?"

"Yea, verily! this day thou shalt see her; and if thou art well pleased with her and with her society,

she may be an inmate of my house, and a companion for my daughter."

"My father is ever kind;" and she left a kiss of gratitude on the father's cheek. "But what is the damsel's name?"

"Par—Parrozi, or Perrazo, or something similar. Thy father is peculiarly unsuccessful in remembering strange names. My daughter will soon have the pleasure of learning these things from the fair damsel herself."

"But can the young maiden converse in Chaldee?"

"She speaks our language, my daughter, with a degree of fluency that is really astonishing. It is evident that her attainments are quite superior, and that all the advantages which Judah's capital could afford have been lavished upon her".

"Oh! it will be delightful to learn beautiful stories of other lands, and have such a sweet and lovely creature for my companion; I am almost impatient to see her."

"Thy wish will soon be gratified. I will have her conveyed hither without much delay. If I mistake not, the maiden will be delighted to tarry under the roof of one whom she calls her 'bountiful benefactor.' Thy father will now leave for a short season, to attend to some business matters of impor-

tance. In two hours I return." And kissing his sweet Jupheena, the soldier hurried out of the apartment. A chariot stood ready at his door, into which he stepped, and was hurried away to another part of the city.

CHAPTER XII.

AN INNOCENT AND HAPPY SURPRISE.

The royal captives, on arriving in the city, were conveyed, according to the strict orders of Barzello, to certain appropriate apartments, prepared for their reception, and nothing requisite to their comfort and entertainment was left wanting. On the very first day of their arrival the God-fearing youths found themselves to be favorites in a land of strangers. The God in whom they trusted gave them adequate strength for their peculiar trials. They found themselves in possession of energy of spirit and courage, that was truly a source of wonderment to themselves. They thought of friends and home with all the fervor of pure affection; but it was not accompanied with those painful agonizing emotions that is wont to accompany the remembrance of nativeland and absent friends; in regard to which state of mind they could well adopt the language of one of their happiest monarchs: "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our sight."

It was about the ninth hour. The pious youthful group were seated together.

"Well, cousin," said Azariah, smiling and looking round the apartment, "this has more the appearance of being guests of royalty than poor captives of war."

"Yea, truly," replied Daniel; "and in this we clearly see the loving kindness of our God, by whom princes rule and kings govern."

"Our kind friend, Barzello," said Hananiah, "has promised to call on us ere the sun sets."

"And he will certainly fulfill his promise," said Mishael.

"We have proved him a genuine and a wise counsellor," said Daniel.

"And his loving kindness shall ever remain deeply graven on our grateful memories," said Azariah.

"Perreeza hopes," said the sister, "that it may be her good providence to be always near the good man, where she may often see his smiling face."

"Our excellent master, under the direction of the King of kings, will order all things for the best," said Hananiah.

"Let us always remember the parting admonitions of our good Prophet," said Mishael, "and calmly

submit our all to the wisdom of the Keeper of Israel."

"Even so, amen!" replied the others. "To the care of Jehovah we submit our all."

"May heaven smile on our dear rel"——

Quick footsteps were heard without, the door opened, and Barzello entered the apartment. The youths unitedly arose, and bowed low, in humble token of respect to the noble officer.

"I trust, my young friends from Judah, find these apartments a comfortable resting place."

"Thy servants," replied Daniel, "are overwhelmed with thy kindness, and hope, in some sphere, by a true and honest deportment, to be able to show their benefactor that his kindness is duly appreciated."

"And how does our young maid of Judah feel after her long journey?" asked Barzello, as he smilingly approached Perreeza.

"Thy maid of Judah is in good health; and being so well provided for on her journey, she experienced but a very slight inconvenience."

"But she must be further provided for. She must have a permanent home in the vicinity of her brothers. An officer of the king, in the city, with whom I am well acquainted, having learned something of the history and deportment of this your

sister, would desire her, if not contrary to her wishes, to be an inmate of his house, and a companion for his only child—a maiden of sixteen summers. Would this be acceptable to the young damsel?"

"Abundantly acceptable, most kind Barzello!" said Perreeza. "Thy young handmaid is ready at any time to do the pleasure of her protector."

"Then I will accompany thee thither without any delay."

Perreeza withdrew to another apartment, and in a short time, returned, attired in her rich native costume, and giving Barzello a sign that she was ready, they both left the apartment. Soon Perreeza found herself by the side of her kind friend, in a richly-ornamented chariot, that hurried them at a rapid rate through the wide and busy thoroughfares. Perreeza was somewhat astonished at the greatness and grandeur of this great Gentile metropolis.

"Your Babylon is truly a great city."

"The greatest on record. How in thine eye compares its beauty with the capital of Judah?"

"In the ornamental—in splendid gardens and bubbling fountains—Babylon surely stands far superior."

The chariot halted, and Perreeza found herself in

front of one of the most beautiful mansions she had ever beheld.

"And is this the officer's mansion?" asked Perreeza, gazing with a degree of astonishment at the great structure rearing its majestic height before her.

"Yea, this is it, fair damsel. But thou appearest somewhat embarrassed. Let the maid of Judah have no fears, for I have every confidence that she will do well."

"Is the noble officer at home?" asked the maid, endeavoring to appear composed.

"He is about the premises, and will soon be in," replied Barzello, with a slight smile.

"What delicious flowers!" cried Perreeza, breathing a little easier.

"Babylon abounds with the like, fair damsel. But come, let us enter, for the officer's daughter is in haste to behold the youthful maid from the land of Judah."

Barzello ascended those steps of spotless marble, and, with a degree of boldness that seemed to surprise his young companion, he entered into a spacious apartment, richly furnished and beautifully ornamented, where Jupheena was ready to receive them, with loving smiles of welcome.

"Jupheena, this is the young maid from the land

of Judah, of whom thy father spoke," and directing his language to Perreeza, at the same time giving Jupheena glance of the eye that was readily understood, he said, "and, young damsel, this is the officer's daughter of whom I spoke."

The two maidens, as if by a magic spell, were soon drawn to each other's arms. The father was well pleased, and a certain moisture of the eye gave strong evidence that he was deeply interested in that scene of mutual affection.

"I shall leave you for a short period, Jupheena," said the officer; "thy father will soon return; when he comes, thou wilt be most happy to present to him thy young companion," and Barzello left the apartment, and thus the two fair ones were left together.

"I am happy to see my young friend from Judah," said Jupheena. "I have been deeply affected by thy history, and that of thy noble brothers. I trust, that in the absence of thy friends, we shall be able to make thee happy."

"Since we left our beloved Jerusalem, and even before, we have experienced nought but kindness from the noble officers of the king, especially the most excellent Barzello. His sympathies have well-nigh overwhelmed us, and we shall love him as long as we live, and implore the blessings of the God of Israel to rest upon his household. Was it not he

that kindly spoke of thy young handmaiden to thy father?"

"I am not aware who it was that first spoke to my father of the maid of Judah," replied Jupheena, smiling, "but Barzello, surely, is deeply interested in thy welfare."

Barzello again entered, and Perreeza looked for the other officer, but no other officer was present. Jupheena arose, and taking her young companion by the hand, led her to her father.

"Maid of Judah, I have now the pleasure of presenting thee to my own dear father, the king's officer, under whose roof I trust thou wilt find a welcome home."

"And this is his only daughter, Jupheena, of whom he spoke," said Barzello, highly delighted, "I trust the maid of Judah will find her a pleasant companion."

Such was the effect of this innocent piece of deception on the mind of young Perreeza, that all the response she could make, was to fall on the neck of her young companion, and weep aloud. But those tears were tears of joy; and those lofty walls were witnesses to the fast falling of other tears than those shed by the maid of Judah.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel!" cried Perreeza, when partially recovered, "who hath given

me favor in the eyes of this people! May Jehovah smile upon his servant Barzello, and upon his lovely daughter, who thus throw open their door to welcome an orphan maid of Israel."

"Thou shalt find under this roof a welcome home," said Barzello, affectionately taking Perreeza by the hand; "in Jupheena thou wilt find a worthy companion and an affectionate friend."

"Thy daughter," answered Jupheena, "will always esteem it a high pleasure to add to the happiness of her young friend."

"And Jehovah assisting me," cried the Hebrew maid, "I will endeavor so to walk before my kind protectors as to be always worthy of their friendly regard."

"If it be pleasing to thy young friend," said Barzello, addressing himself to his daughter, "she may be again conducted to inform her brothers of her new home."

"My brothers will be overjoyed," answered Perreeza, "to learn the success of their sister; and to me, it will afford the greatest pleasure to convey to them the joyful intelligence."

"If it will please my daughter," said Barzello, "she may accompany us. What sayest thou, Jupheena?"

"Thy daughter most gratefully accepts thy kind offer."

"Then presently we shall go. Franzo shall order the chariot, and in the mean time ye may put yourselves in readiness."

This required but a short time. Jupheena was highly delighted with the thought of being permitted to see those youths of Judah, of whom her father discoursed in such unmeasured terms of praise. The word was soon given that all was ready; and Barzello's chariot, drawn by those fiery steeds, was once more on its way to that part of the city where the youths of Judah waited, with anxious solicitude, to know their future destiny. They soon halted at the desired spot; and Perreeza was permitted to see her brothers alone, where, free from embarrassment caused by the presence of strangers, she might, in her own simple manner and in her native tongue, tell them her story.

"Our young friend, peradventure, will be pleased to see her brothers and cousin without any delay, while Jupheena will accompany her father on an errand of business at the house of an officer near by. Thou mayest inform thy brothers and cousin that we shall call and see them presently."

Perreeza embraced the opportunity, and thanking the officer with one of her peculiar smiles, hurried to their apartment.

"Back again, precious Perreeza!" cried Azariah,

hastening to meet her. "And did our sister see the king's officer and his young daughter, of whom Barzello spoke?"

"I did!" exclaimed his sister, while unusual joy beamed in her countenance.

"And from thy countenance I am prepared to judge that the interview has been a happy one," said her cousin Daniel.

"Never was there a happier interview, cousin. The noble officer's kindness is unbounded, and his daughter is one of the loveliest beings I ever beheld."

"Perreeza, I trust, will not forget the kindness of Barzello, in the warmth of her gratitude to her new friend," said Azariah.

"Never fear that, my dear brother. The remembrance of Barzello's kindness is too deeply graven on Perreeza's heart to be ever forgotten; and while I remain under the roof of the king's officer, I shall daily become more deeply indebted to the kind Barzello."

"It must be that through his kind interposition our beloved sister found so good a home," said Mishael, "and if this officer, under whose roof she has found a shelter, partakes of the spirit of Barzello, her home must be a happy one. Perreeza, does he appear like unto our noble friend?"

"The very image of him!" said the sister, laughing heartily. "Now, brothers and cousin, let Perreeza undeceive you on this point. This noble officer, whose house is to be my future home, is none other than our own illustrious Barzello himself. This truth was made known to me in a way that well-nigh prostrated me. Oh, brothers, is not this delightful?"

"Praised be Jehovah!" broke silently from the lips of the youths of Judah.

"For conversation we have but a short time," said Perreeza; "Barzello and his lovely Jupheena are below, and will be here in a few moments, and from hence I accompany them to their delightful home. Hark ye! I hear their footsteps."

Barzello, with a smiling countenance, entered the apartment, leading by the hand his beautiful daughter. Perreeza ran to meet her young companion, while the four youths were not wanting in appropriate obeisance to the noble officer; all of which was closely watched by the young Chaldean maid, as she smilingly sat by the side of the maid of Judah.

"Have our young friends received any communications from any of the king's officers since our last interview?"

"Thy servants have received no communication

from any source, since the departure of their kind friend, about the ninth hour," answered Daniel.

"To-morrow morning, peradventure, ye shall learn the pleasure of the king in regard to your future course; and I trust ye will find that our noble monarch is not wholly unmindful of your former rank and station in your own land."

"Thy servants," answered Azariah, "hope, by a diligent and honest deportment in every branch of service which the King of the Chaldeans may set apart for them, to show forth the grateful feelings of their hearts."

"Let the youths of Judah but retain their present worthy deportment, and they will soon find that the Chaldeans are not blind to true amiability and excellence of character."

"Permit thy unworthy servants once more," said Azariah, "to acknowledge, with grateful hearts, thy kind regards for their beloved sister, whom thou hast taken as an inmate of thy hospitable mansion. Perreeza will always delight to do thy pleasure, and to be the obedient servant of thy amiable young daughter."

"Your sister, while under my roof, shall not be looked upon in an inferior light. The chosen companion of my daughter will command due respect from those in high circles. The maid of Judah need

not feel embarrassed, for her literary attainments will compare favorably with the most polished maidens of her own age in Babylon. She is not a *captive*. With the noble feeling of a sister's heart, and of her own accord, she accompanied her brothers to a land of strangers. She is as free as any daughter of Chaldea; and therefore my Jupheena will be happy to introduce her to her friends in her real character, as a youthful maid of the royal line of Judah. In thus drawing a line of distinction between yourselves and your sister, far be it from me to think that your present relation to our government renders you, in any *real* sense, inferior to others—'tis but a name, and will soon be forgotten; for it is in the power of the king to elevate you, not only to proper citizenship, but to high rank and prominent stations in the government."

"Thy servants," said Daniel, "are not careful in this matter; with all readiness they stand ready to execute the pleasure of their superiors."

"Your sister will now accompany us home. Any article she wishes conveyed thither, shall be sent for without delay. Now, my daughter, are we ready?"

"All ready, father, unless Perreeza has aught unfinished."

"I have nought to hinder," answered Perreeza, with a trembling voice.

That affectionate glance, from those swimming eyes of the sister, toward the four youths, plainly spoke the emotions of a throbbing heart; and the glance was no sooner encountered, than it created kindred emotions in their bosoms. Before them stood the lovely form of her who had hitherto been the shining centre of all their earthly enjoyment—that sweet Perreeza, whose voice of melody would always soothe their troubled spirits—whose joyous laugh would chase away their despondency and gloom. Their only sister—their pet—on whose countenance played the image of that once blooming mother, who now calmly rested in the burial-ground of their fathers in their own native Jerusalem; and now, for the first time, they were to part! and although they greatly rejoiced in that beneficent Providence that had so kindly provided for her a future happy home, yet to part with Perreeza was something they had never experienced. They had looked for it, and, moreover, they had endeavored to realize it, but when it came to them and her, it was *new:* and with all their efforts, on either side, they could not keep back the rushing feelings of warm affection. Perreeza walked in silence to each of her brothers, and also to her cousin Daniel, and warmly embraced them.

"May Jehovah with His wing of love overshadow

my lovely cousin," said Daniel, with very deep emotion.

"Even so, Amen!" responded the deeply affected brothers; "and the daily prayers of the youths of Judah shall faithfully ascend to the ears of the God of Israel, in behalf of our kind master and his lovely daughter."

Jupheena was bathed in tears, and Barzello, although not willing to betray his feelings at that time, had occasion, ever and anon, to brush away some unpleasant liquid intruders that made free in the vicinity of the soldier's eye.

"Now we are ready," said Perreeza, with a calm smile, and hand in hand those youthful maidens followed their leader, and soon their chariot wheels were heard whirling in the street below.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXCELLENT PROJECT FROM A HIGH SOURCE.

In a royal apartment, decorated in superlative grandeur, sat the powerful monarch of Chaldea. He was alone. His countenance bespoke a degree of self-complacency and satisfaction. Around him, on the rich carpet, were strewed several large scrolls of manuscript, while, in his hand, he held carelessly what appeared to be a well-arranged map of battle-fields and grand points of attack. Chaldea, at this time, was the seat of science and learning. Thither the great of other nations resorted to acquire literary distinction. Nebuchadnezzar, from his childhood up, had been initiated into all the arts and sciences; and, as he was a youth possessing a superior mind, he made great proficiency in all his numerous studies; and, before he ascended the throne, he was pronounced to be one of the brightest scholars within the whole realm; and now, although a monarch, surrounded by a thousand cares and perplexities, he bestowed much thought on his own favorite

studies; and one of his most prominent desires, was the perpetuity and advancement of learning among his subjects. A dull, stupid individual, however high his rank, could never share the company of the young King of Babylon. All who moved within royal enclosures, whether as courtiers, under officers, or domestics, had to be those of discerning minds and good intelligence. What exact train of thought occupied the monarch's mind at this time we may better judge, perhaps, from the sequel. He rose from his reclining posture, and lightly touched a shining key, which instantly answered in a remote part of the royal palace. The door opened, and an officer bowed himself into the apartment.

"And what is the pleasure of my lord the king?"

"Ashpenaz," said the king, in a familiar voice, "thou knowest well that there is a painful scarcity of waiters to stand in the presence of the king; and even those we have are not what I could desire them to be in point of intelligence and cultivation. This must be remedied without delay. My father's taste in this matter was somewhat different from mine. Far be it from me to cast any reflection on the judgment of my illustrious father; but the glory and splendor of my empire are on the forward march, and things at the royal palace must not be

permitted to fall in the rear. I am about to lay a foundation to a measure that will yet shed glory and lustre on my reign. What is more mortifying, Ashpenaz, while endeavoring to entertain our own dignitaries, and the visiting nobles of other nations, than to witness the blundering ignorance of our own attendants? I am sick of it. In this I cast no blame on my worthy and noble officer—by no means. Ashpenaz, thou hast done well under the circumstances, but thou hast labored under great disadvantages. From henceforth I shall do better by thee.

"In my last campaign, I gave orders to convey to Babylon a number of young men of the kingly line, both from Egypt and Judah. From the conversation I had with Barzello, I am led to believe that there are among them some very superior minds. Now, it is the wish of thy king, that a number of these youths be taken, and in company with some of our own young men, be trained up in the knowledge of our arts and sciences, and receive, moreover, particular instruction in all the laws of etiquette, and court-customs and maxims, so as to be of efficient service to the king, and at the same time, reflect honor on their stations. About their instruction, there must be nothing shallow or superficial. There must be thorough work. For this they must have

reasonable time. I therefore appoint the period of their studying to be three years; at the end of which let them be brought before the king for examination; and let those who will be able to give satisfaction be permitted to stand before the king. Moreover, as diet of the best sort contributes both to the beauty of the body and the improvement of the mind, let them have their daily portion of the king's meat and the wine which he drinketh. Now, Ashpenaz, for further information thou art to consult Barzello. He will select a certain number of young men, and deliver them over to thee, and thou art to lose no time in placing them under suitable instructors."

"Thy servant," replied Ashpenaz, "is ever happy to obey the orders of his illustrious sovereign, which are always issued in that profound wisdom derived only from the gods;" and Ashpenaz, the master of the eunuchs, in quite a respectful mood, slowly left the presence of the Chaldean monarch.

This officer stood high in the estimation of the king. He was calm, dignified, and deeply experienced in all things pertaining to the duties of his high office. For a long time he had served as a confidential servant of the king's father; and was highly honored by young and old at the court. This dignitary was soon on his way towards the house of his friend Barzello, with whom he had been on terms of the warmest friendship for many years.

"Good morning to my friend Ashpenaz," said Barzello, with a welcome smile.

"And a good morning to our excellent Barzello," was the hearty response.

"And how do things move on at the palace?"

"O, pleasantly. Our young monarch is bent on thorough reform in all deficient quarters."

"Babylon needs reforming; and may he never pause until the work is perfected. Long life to our good monarch!"

"Ah! my good Barzello, if all that is to be accomplished, he needs a long life indeed. But I have but a short time to tarry. The king desires a number of the royal captives of Judah and Egypt to be placed under proper instructions, to prepare them, after three years' training, to be royal waiters at the palace. In thy wisdom thou art to select from among them the most perfect in body and mind, and deliver them over to my charge; and, according to the orders of his majesty, I shall immediately place them under suitable teachers."

"This will be attended to without delay," answered Barzello. "Of the captivity of Egypt, there are quite a number of youths of high origin, and who, for aught I know, may possess superior powers of mind. I have had no great facilities to test their capacities. Of the captivity of Judah, there are only four that I can with confidence recommend to

the care and charge of my worthy friend. These four are noble specimens of humanity—beautiful in bodily form and complexion, and truly amiable and excellent in mind. I will assure my worthy friend, that of all the acquaintances I ever formed among men, and they have been quite numerous in different lands, none ever impressed me so favorably as these four youths from the land of Judah. They worship no god but the God of the Hebrews. In this they show but their faithfulness and their consistency. My worthy friend will pardon my warmth in speaking of these children, for there are incidents connected with their history, which I need not now mention, that have greatly endeared them to thine unworthy friend; and I have no doubt that thou wilt find them to be all they are recommended to be."

"I have all confidence in the judgment and wisdom of my worthy friend," answered Ashpenaz, "and it affords me much pleasure to hear such a favorable report of those who are to be placed under my charge; and I assure my good Barzello, that their worth and excellence will be duly noticed and appreciated."

"If thou art in haste, I will accompany thee without delay to the young men's apartments; perhaps thou wouldst be pleased to see them."

"After such a warm recommendation, it will cer-

tainly be quite a favor—but where is thy sweet Jupheena? This call will hardly recompense me, if I must leave without a glance at that little beauty."

"Ah, indeed! Perhaps our good friend Ashpenaz will have no objection to gaze on *two* beauties instead of one."

"All the better, my friend."

A female servant was quickly sent to the young ladies' room, to inform them that they were wanted below, and in a few minutes the two beauties were seen, side by side, marching into the presence of the two delighted officers. Perreeza never appeared lovelier and more beautiful. Attired in the rich, flowing simplicity of her Hebrew costume, with a degree of blushing modesty on her yet animated countenance, she appeared almost angelic. Jupheena, perfectly acquainted with her father's friend, felt not the least embarrassment.

"Two beauties instead of one, surely," said Ashpenaz, gazing with a degree of wonder on the fair form of Perreeza.

Barzello took the maid of Judah by the hand, and approaching his friend, said—

"This is young Perreeza, of the royal line of Judah, who, of her own accord, accompanied her brothers to the land of the Chaldeans, and has seen fit to favor us with her company."

"No very small favor, Barzello," cried Ashpenaz, bowing low; "I hope the partiality of the gods will not make us quarrel."

"Let not my noble friend be unjust to the gods. If the maid of Judah is an inmate of the house of Barzello, I trust that three brothers and a cousin, given to the sole charge of Ashpenaz, will convince him that the gods are not partial."

"Ah! that will do," said Ashpenaz, still gazing on the maid of Judah.

"Perreeza," said Barzello, "from pure love for her three brothers, of whom I spake, saw fit to leave her native land and venture her future destiny among strangers."

"I trust," answered Ashpenaz, "they are indeed worthy of such a sister's pure affection."

"That is a point soon settled in the minds of all who have the pleasure of their acquaintance."

"Permit me to congratulate my young friend, Jupheena, on the happy addition to the number of her youthful friends."

"Our beloved Ashpenaz may well congratulate," replied the young beauty; "and let him be assured that his congratulations are warmly appreciated."

"And how does our young friend from Judah enjoy the society of her Chaldean friends?"

"Thy young handmaiden enjoys their society

much," modestly replied Perreeza. "If she stands in any danger, it must be from an excess of kindness."

"I trust the maid of Judah will sustain no material injury from any amount of kindness received at my house," said Barzello, laughing. "If she does, she must charge it to herself; for, under the circumstances, to be less kind is entirely out of our power."

"Barzello," cried the master of the eunuchs, "thy house is a famous spot for officers to forget their great hurry. Come, my good friend; business is pressing—let us be away. The interview has been peculiarly interesting. A good-day to the 'two beauties instead of one.'"

And the two officers hurried from the apartment, entered a chariot, and were on their way to the appointed place.

"A charming damsel that, Barzello."

"All of that, my worthy friend."

"What are her literary attainments?"

"All that Judah's capital could bestow."

"How will she compare with the refined maids of Babylon?"

"She will compare favorably with the most polished in Chaldea."

"Thou art in jest, Barzello"

"Look at my countenance; perceivest thou any jesting there?"

"Nay, verily. And the brothers?"

"All thy richest fancies could paint them."

"And yet captives of war!"

"Yea—captives of war."

"The captivity of genius must be of short duration."

"So sayeth thy servant Barzello."

"They'll work their way through."

"And may the gods prosper them."

The chariot halted. The two officers alighted, and without delay they hastened to the apartments of the Hebrew youths.

"A happy day to the youths of Judah," said Barzello, in a lively tone. "This is my noble friend, Ashpenaz, a high officer of the king at the palace. From this hour ye are to be under his special directions. The king, in his great wisdom, has seen fit to give orders that a number of young men, both from Judah and Egypt, be selected, and placed under proper instructions, in order to acquire proficiency in all the wisdom and learning of Chaldea; so as to be suitable persons to stand before the king, and wait upon his person. I trust this will be highly agreeable to my worthy young friends from the land of Judah?"

"Thy servants," replied Daniel, bowing gracefully, "will be greatly delighted to be placed in any spot where they can be of service to their worthy superiors."

"To-morrow, then," said Ashpenaz, "ye shall enter upon new duties, and commence your important studies. Your teachers are in readiness—men of superior powers of mind, and well versed in the art of teaching. The king himself will be greatly interested in your progress, and therefore has prepared apartments for the students within the royal enclosures, where he will at times appear personally, to learn their advancement. To-morrow, at the third hour, ye will hold yourselves in readiness to be conveyed thither."

"Thy servants will be in readiness at the appointed hour," said Daniel.

"Now for the Egyptians, Barzello," said Ashpenaz, smiling, as they left the apartment.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH WE FIND FOUR TEETOTALERS.

At the appointed hour, our youths, in company with many others, were conveyed to their new habitation, which was a beautiful building, erected in the vicinity of the king's palace. Here all the students were received with great civility, and commended to their different apartments. The four Hebrews were not separated, but permitted to remain as heretofore. They found that everything conducive to their comfort and enjoyment had been provided here as well as at the apartments they had left. Hitherto they had no knowledge of the manner in which they were to receive instruction, or the precise nature of their studies. They knew the Chaldeans to be noted for their learning, and they were not without their fears, lest the Babylonian youths, who were to be their fellow-students, should outstrip them, and leave them far in the distance; however, they were fully determined to acquit them-

selves to the utmost of their ability, and leave the event with the God of their fathers. Nothing could have given them greater satisfaction than the course marked out for them by the king. Indeed, if it had been left to their own choice to select, it could not have been otherwise. From the days of their early childhood they had been close students, and they had become well versed in Hebrew lore, and had a fair knowledge of Chaldee, which was often studied in Judah, as an ornamental branch of education. This proved a very favorable item in their experience, but there were very numerous studies before them, to which, as Jews, they were utter strangers, and to acquire even a respectable knowledge of which, demanded much time and perseverance. The king was aware of this when he appointed the time of their probation to be three years. The Egyptian youths were of royal descent, and had some knowledge of the Chaldee, and were well acquainted with several branches of learning pertaining to their native land. The Chaldean portion of the students were mostly of the city of Babylon, and already somewhat advanced in what was considered the higher branches.

When conducted to their respective rooms, they were given to understand that, at a certain signal, they were all to assemble below, where Ashpenaz

would meet them, address them, and enlighten them in regard to the duties of their future course.

The four Hebrews were quietly seated in one of their apartments, each one engaged in satisfying his curiosity by gazing at the richly carved casings and highly ornamented articles of furniture.

"Well, cousins," said Daniel, with a smile, "I trust they will not un-Hebrew us with their Chaldean mysteries."

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem!" said Azariah, with feeling, "let my right hand forget her cunning."

"Let my tongue be palsied if I forget, for a day, the loved ones at home," said Hananiah.

"When the sweet memories of our beloved Prophet shall be obliterated from this bosom," said Mishael, laying his hand upon his breast, "then let me be utterly forsaken."

"The law of Jehovah shall be the rule of our actions," said Daniel; "to Him we yield our hearty and willing obedience. May"——

The grand signal was heard below, and, without delay, the young men, from different parts of the building, were seen hurrying to the commodious apartment set apart for the occasion. Here they found a number of the king's officers assembled, among whom the youths of Judah soon recognized

the pleasant smiling countenance of Barzello. They were soon seated in perfect order, and Babylon never witnessed, in personal appearance, a more interesting group of youths. They were received by the officers with a smile of satisfaction, and with a look of admiration. Presently, the dignified form of Ashpenaz was seen moving slowly towards the rostrum; he ascended, gracefully bowed to the officers on either side, and proceeded:

"Young men, by the command of our great and illustrious sovereign, the King of Babylon, ye are now assembled together. It is his pleasure that ye be trained in all the learning and wisdom of the Chaldeans. In this ye perceive the unbounded nature of his goodness and clemency, as well as his great knowledge and wisdom. He might, according to his matchless power, have ordained your destinies to be otherwise, and far less exalted; but the promptings of his great heart have appointed for you an honorable career, if ye but avail yourselves in earnest of the grand opportunity now presented.

"It is of the utmost importance that those who are destined to minister in the king's presence, should be well initiated into the ways and manners, maxims and customs of our nation, and be well versed in all the learning of the Chaldeans. Nothing short of this can meet the demands and

reasonable expectations of our great monarch; and for this he has carefully provided every facility. Your teachers are of the most superior in the realm, and an ample period is appointed for the perfection of your accomplishments.

"In addition to literary attainments, the king looks for moral integrity, uprightness of character, and true amiability of deportment. Without these, the most learned can never add to the real dignity of the court, nor to the stability of the Empire; but, on the contrary, such an one, destitute of moral principle, must prove a dangerous element in any and all communities. Let this be deeply impressed on your youthful minds, and seek earnestly to cultivate those nobler powers of the mind, as well as the intellectual faculties.

"Those of you from Egypt, and especially those of you from Judah, have no faith in our gods, or sympathy with our mode of worship. From your infancy ye have been taught to do homage to the God of your fathers, and to His worship ye have pledged your future lives. The King of Babylon, in his great wisdom, has seen fit to put no obstacles between you and the worship of your deities. Ye are at liberty to serve your gods and adore after the dictates of your own consciences; and, moreover, ye are not required to perform any act that may be

contrary to your religious convictions. I trust that this great favor will be rightly appreciated, and never abused. While ye are thus kindly permitted to worship your own gods, show no disrespect to those who may differ from you, and on whose good will and favor your future success must greatly depend.

"At the end of three years, ye will appear for public examination, on which occasion the king himself will appear in person, and take an active part. I make this known in order to give you an additional motive for diligence and activity; for those who shall give the clearest evidence of ripe scholarship will certainly stand the most favorable in the estimation of the king, and receive the highest promotion. A number of you are already somewhat advanced in some important branches, and in this ye have a decided advantage over these youths from foreign lands; but let them not be faint-hearted; a vigorous mind, with a noble purpose, will conquer every impediment, and triumph nobly at last.

"As a proof of his high regard for your physical and intellectual prosperity, the king has appointed your meat and drink to be conveyed from his own table. This, indeed, is an honor conferred on but few in Babylon. Thus, ye readily perceive, that

nothing is wanting that is in the least calculated to enhance your comfort or speed your literary progress. Ye have but to apply yourselves diligently to your studies, and be careful to maintain a correct deportment, and ye shall reap the reward of fidelity, in being permitted to stand in the presence of the king.

"It is the desire of your sovereign, that those from Egypt and Judah be known hereafter by names more suitable to the country in which ye now abide. These names ye shall hereafter learn from your respective teachers. Ye may now return in perfect order to your respective apartments. To-morrow at the second hour, at a given signal, ye will appear at this place again, and formally enter upon your studies. Remember, to-morrow morning at the second hour."

The students, with perfect regularity, in obedience to the direction of their superior, left the audience room and returned to their respective apartments, much delighted with the remarks of Ashpenaz, and especially with the kind manner in which they were delivered. And Ashpenaz, together with his numerous fellow-officers present on that occasion, were not less delighted with the interesting sight on which they had gazed; and all agreed that in this the young King of Chaldea had displayed much wisdom and ingenuity.

The four youths after having reached their rooms, for a while sat in silence; and from the countenance of Daniel it might have been easily gathered that all was not well. The brothers were not slow to notice this, and it caused them some uneasiness. Usually their cousin took the lead in all conversation, but at this time Daniel was mute.

"Well, cousin," said Azariah, "how wast thou pleased with the address of our new master?"

"Highly pleased, upon the whole. He surely is a man of kind feelings and refined taste."

"But my dear cousin seems somewhat disconsolate, and very much less cheerful than when we left this apartment but one hour ago. We are at a loss to find a cause for this sudden change."

"I perceive that a certain part of the address, which struck me as rather unfortunate for us, was not looked upon in that light by my fair cousins."

"I suppose thou hast reference to that part relating to the change of names. For my part, I am not over tenacious on that point, for to me thou wilt always remain 'Cousin Daniel,' and to thee, I trust, I shall always be 'Cousin Azariah;' and if the Chaldeans prefer to call me Bel-sha-bo-raze-ba-phoo, and my Cousin Daniel Sha-go-mer-zalta-ba-phee, or some other long name, let them by all means be gratified."

"My worthy cousin is mistaken in regard to this

point," said Daniel, smiling, while the three brothers, for the first time in Babylon, joined in a hearty laugh. "As far as names are concerned, they are welcome to add on the syllables to their hearts' content; but, seriously, cousins, there is a point that, if not rightly managed, will entangle us in serious difficulties. I have reference to that part which made mention of our meat and drink. How can we, as Hebrews, defile ourselves with meats, portions of which are offered to idols, and with wine, sacrificed to the gods of Chaldea? This would be in direct violation of the law of our God. To this we can never consent; and, moreover, we are not accustomed to these dainties, and such high living can never be congenial to our health and happiness. Ye know, cousins, that from beholding the drunken degradation of those in high authority in Judah, our parents, many years ago, arrived at the wise conclusion that their children, in order to escape the pitfalls into which others had fallen, should never be counted among wine-drinkers. To this desire of our fond parents we strictly adhered while in Jerusalem, although often ridiculed by drunken wit, and frowned upon by countenances flushed with strong drink. Shall we, then, in a strange land, forget the covenant of our God, and violate our sacred obligations to our beloved parents? No, cousins, this must

never be. I trust we may yet be excused, for we were informed that we would not be required to perform any act against our religious convictions. Our food must remain simple, as in Judah; and by this we shall not only adhere to the requirements of Jehovah, but we shall also be better able to master those arduous studies which stand before us in such formidable array."

"Right, noble cousin," cried Azariah, hastening up to Daniel, and grasping him affectionately by the hand; "*always* right! On thee be the sole management of the business; and we are confident that, as usual, under the blessing of God, we shall come forth triumphantly."

"First of all, then, I must have an interview with our kind master."

Footsteps were now heard approaching their apartment. Daniel opened the door, and finding there a servant of Ashpenaz, addressed him—

"Will the servant of our noble master have the kindness to convey to him a message, in few words, from one of the youths of Judah?"

"The servant of my Lord Ashpenaz will always be happy to do all in his power for the comfort and happiness of those from Judah; and any message to my lord I am ready to convey."

"The message is this: Daniel, of the captivity of

Judah, asks the favor of a short interview with his kind lord, Ashpenaz."

The servant respectfully bowed and departed, and soon was found in the presence of the prince of the eunuchs.

"Well, Melzar, is there anything of importance?"

"Daniel, of the captivity of Judah, asks the favor of a short interview with my Lord Ashpenaz."

"And where is he?"

"He addressed me from the door of his apartment."

"Go, without delay, and with that respect due to nobility, conduct him hither."

Melzar was soon at the door of the captive's apartment; and Daniel was informed that Ashpenaz was waiting for his presence below, and in a few moments Daniel stood in the presence of his kind friend.

"And what is the pleasure of my young friend from Judah?"

Here Daniel explained, in an eloquent manner, the objections he and his three companions had to partake of the portion of the king's meat and the wine which he drank, the substance of which is already known to the reader.

"This is rather a delicate point, my young friend," answered Ashpenaz, with a degree of perplexity visi-

ble on his countenance. "If your meat and drink were of my own appointment, your request could be granted with the greatest ease and pleasure; but since the order comes from the king, I see not how it can be granted without disobedience to superior orders. The king desires to give you every opportunity to improve, if possible, your appearance. I fear my lord the king. For why should he see your faces worse looking than the children which are of your degree? Then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king?"

"Prove thy servants, I beseech, thee, ten days," said Daniel, turning towards Melzar, "and let them give us *vegetable* food, and *pure cold water* to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat, and as thou seest, deal with thy servants."

"Well," replied Ashpenaz, smiling, "if the king's object is accomplished, I trust he is not tenacious about the article of food; so, Melzar, let our young friends be gratified in this repect. Let them have a trial of ten days, and if at the end of that time they have retained their beauty and freshness, let them be fed with vegetables."

"Permit me, in the absence of my three cousins, to offer their gratitude, with my own, to our noble

lord for his kind favor," said Daniel, as he bowed himself gracefully out of the apartment.

The morning of the tenth day dawned upon our Hebrew captives. Their days of trial were soon over, and they felt no fear of the scrutinizing gaze of Melzar. Health and beauty played on their fair cheeks, and they were well prepared for the inspection; and Melzar declared, with due humility, in their presence, that such countenances were not to be found in all Babylon. Now, Melzar was an excellent judge of beauty.

Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.

CHAPTER XV.

A MYSTERIOUS CHARACTER IN ECSTASIES.

At the house of Barzello things moved onward harmoniously as usual. Jupheena and Perreeza became daily more attached to each other, and daily more happy, in the pure enjoyment of one another's pure affection. Perreeza had been presented by her young friend to a number of noble families; and in regard to the accomplishments and amiability of the maid of Judah, there was but one opinion among those who had the pleasure of her society. Already she had become the subject of conversation in high circles, and many were the secret desires in many a bosom, to witness those fascinating charms, which were reported to be possessed by the Hebrew damsel. Happily for Perreeza she was an inmate of one of the most amiable families in the great city; and the society in which Jupheena moved was one approved by her father, and consequently, safe. The youthful beauties were closely, tenderly, and affectionately

watched, not only by the observing eye of Barzello, but also by his numerous chaste and virtuous female relatives. Jupheena lost a beloved mother when but a mere child; but not for one day had she been neglected. She was not, on the one hand, permitted to suffer from a lack of affection, nor, on the other, was she injured by over indulgence. She was a well trained child. Her companions were select, and of the most happy. Her books such as would at the same time both instruct and amuse. She was an only child; and it was happy for the daughter of Barzello, having lost a precious mother, that she fell into the hands of such valuable friends. Barzello knew well who were fit and safe companions for his daughter; and it took no great period for the keen observation of the officer to ascertain that Perreeza was, indeed, a choice spirit. She also, like unto her young Chaldean friend, had been blessed with kind relatives. The watchful eye of her Aunt Josepha had been over her for good; and she had moved but little in the society of any but those who feared the Lord, and that thought on His name.

Among the acquaintance of Barzello, with whom he had been on terms of intimacy for a long series of years, was one Joram, a very rich and influential merchant of the city. Although not a native of Babylon, it had been his residence from the days

of his youth. It had never as yet been clearly understood from what part of the vast empire he had hailed. He arrived there a stranger, without means; but possessing brilliant business capacities, he soon found a situation. His employers became much attached to him, and he was soon promoted to posts of trust and responsibility. While yet young he was joined in marriage to a charming damsel, two years younger than himself, who proved to him to be the loveliest of characters, and the most affectionate of wives. They were blessed with two children, both sons, and, from one step to another, Joram had become one of the wealthiest individuals in the great metropolis. Their children had grown up to be youths of surpassing beauty, with a general deportment of a corresponding nature.

Joram was an individual possessing a large amount of singularity of character and manners. About his speech, although a fluent speaker, there was something that gave a Babylonian to understand that Chaldee was not the language that he had always spoken. He was ardent in his affections, and not very slow in his wrath. His wit was ever ready and abundant. He was a critical observer of men and things. He had great passion for music and flowers, played on several musical instruments, and always denoted his favorites among the maidens

of Babylon by the names of some choice roses or flowers. But what gave him the greatest appearance of singularity, was his utter refusal, even from the days of his youth, to join with the populace in paying religious homage to the gods. But even this, among other things, was put down among his singularities. He never was known to advocate any strange theory of religion, and was never accused of infidelity. In all other respects he stood above reproach; and his friendship was regarded as a compliment. At first, there was a mystery about his origin, which created some harmless inquiries; but this had been given up for many years, and each one was satisfied to know that Joram, the merchant, was one of the most valuable citizens in the great emporium. While the companions of his children were loud in their praise of their ancestors, the children of Joram were always silent; and once, when rather abruptly interrogated, in regard to their grand-parents, they modestly replied, that they were all dead before they were born. These sons of Joram were well taught in the highest schools in the city; and it was positively declared by some of their fellow-students, that they were heard to converse together in some language not connected with their course of studies.

Not many days after the four Hebrews had been

delivered over to the care of Ashpenaz, Barzello, as he was oft wont to do, walked over leisurely to the house of his friend Joram. He found him eagerly pausing over an ancient-looking manuscript, written, as Barzello then thought, in rather strange characters. The book was hastily laid aside, and the visitor was received with the warmest welcome.

"A happy day to my good friend Joram," said Barzello, with his usual smile.

"Many thanks to the brave soldier for his kind wish, while the same is cordially returned," answered Joram.

"Thy family is in good health, I trust," said the soldier. "I have not had the pleasure of seeing them for these many days."

"We are all enjoying excellent health, Barzello, thanks be to Je—— Providence. How are the inmates of thy house, especially the 'Lily of the Valley?' "

"All well. The 'Lily of the Valley' never appeared fairer. But now we have another rose; and my Friend Joram must give it a name without delay; and if thou hast, among thy mysterious names of foreign flowers, one that stands preëminent, let it be bestowed on the fair rose from the land of Judah, now at my house."

"Barzello!" cried the merchant, his eyes spark-

ling with delight. "I have heard much already of this young maiden from Judah. My children, the other night, had the pleasure of seeing her for a few minutes, and they have done little else ever since than speak of her charms! Ah, my good friend! this rose from Judah must have an appropriate name. But when shall thy friend Joram have the pleasure of an introduction to this little prodigy that has set all Babylon in commotion?"

"When my friend Joram shall favor us with a call, then we shall be most happy to present to him the young maid of the royal line of Judah."

"Yea, of the royal line! This rose, Barzello, is of a superior origin, and must, therefore, have an appropriate and superior name. This night, my friend, I must be at thy house, and have the pleasure of conversing with this young maiden from Israel. Some of Judah's damsels are famous for their love of music. How"——

"Ah!" interrupted Barzello, "and so is our young friend. She sings as one fresh from the gods. To hear her thrilling lays, accompanied by the soul-stirring tones of a stringed instrument, which she calls her 'Harp of Judah,' is enough to melt a heart of stone."

"Harp of Judah!" cried Joram, suddenly rising to his feet. "Ah, Barzello! the harp of J—— the

harp is a famous instrument! Pardon my enthusiasm, my good friend; the very mention of music touches my finest feelings, and for the harp I have a peculiar taste, even from the days of my childhood."

There was an earnestness about Joram at this time that, even to him, was unusual. In finishing his sentence, there was a slight trembling of the voice, which had clearly showed an emotion of mind.

"Well," replied Barzello, "to-night we shall have the happiness of presenting our young friend from Judah to our excellent Joram. Come early, and, if possible, let thy whole family accompany thee. This was my sole errand in calling on thee at this time—to give thee a pressing invitation to come and see us."

"Nothing could give us greater pleasure, my good friend; and we cannot be grateful enough to our excellent Barzello, for the manifest interest he takes in the happiness of his unworthy friend and his family."

"Then I return," said the smiling officer, "with the welcome intelligence to my family, that we shall have the pleasure of a visit this night from the Joram family."

"Or rather," said the delighted merchant, "that

the Joram family is to be highly honored by being permitted to share the friendship and regards of one of the first families in Babylon. No reply, Barzello! Our best wishes to thy sister, the 'Lily of the Valley,' and the new rose—to-night we shall hear those sweet strains from the 'harp of Judah'—charming!"

Barzello left his friend, the merchant, highly delighted with the interview, and not less so in the anticipation of an another one, before many hours. In walking slowly towards his own mansion, the soldier's mind was naturally led to dwell on some of the peculiarities of his friend Joram, and he was sure that at this time he had been "unusually peculiar. Why was he so animated at the bare mention of the harp of Judah? It might have been on account of his extreme love of music. Was there not a mystery about him, which no one as yet had fathomed? And were there not charms about him, which ensured the love and admiration of all who knew him?

"Let me see," soliloquized the soldier. "About twenty-six years ago I first saw him. He was then about twenty-one years of age; and never was there a more beautiful form to behold. He spoke our language with much ease, but the general conviction then was, that he was a foreigner. I have my firm

conviction now, that he is not of us; and that, secretly, he, with his whole family, are worshippers of other gods. Is this anything against him? Nay, verily! It rather proves him to be a man of conscience. But where is he from? Once I asked him—many years ago; and what was his reply? 'My early history can never be of any useful interest to any one, and my noble friend will pardon me, if on that point I choose to keep silent.' Was there anything wrong in that? Nay. It was noble, plain, and out-spoken. And how he hath succeeded. The man is scarcely to be found that has a soul so diminutive as to envy him his great prosperity. Is there one man in Babylon that is more universally beloved than he? Not one. If there are any secrets connected with his early history, let him retain them, as long as his wisdom may dictate. A child of a drudge, or a son of a nobleman, Joram the merchant, is one of the best men in the world, and may the gods continue to bless his household."

Thus mused Barzello while on his homeward way; and there is no telling when his musings would have ended, had not the sight of his own mansion suddenly brought them to a close. He gently ascended the steps and entered, and was greeted, as usual, with welcome smiles and showers of blessings.

"Dear brother, we have been waiting for thee with a degree of anxiety."

"I am aware, Luzora, that to-day I am later than usual. I walked over to the house of my friend Joram, and, as usual, we had some pleasant conversation; and this explains the reason of my delay."

"And are they all in good health?"

"All in good health; and, moreover, I am happy to inform thee, that this night we shall be favored with a visit from my good friend, and, at least, a part of his family."

"Delightful! This is a sufficient atonement for all the anxiety caused by brother's absence. And I prophecy we shall have an addition to our list of flowers."

"Thou rightly judgest, my sister."

"And I hope it will be found to be an appropriate one; for our little beauty must never be classed among common roses."

"I am ready to trust my friend Joram in that department—but where are the young damsels?"

"Thy sister knows not," said Luzora, laughing, "unless the gods have concluded that they were too fair for the society of mortals, and have stolen them away."

"If they have stolen away the maid of Judah," said Barzello, humorously, "I would advise them to

be on their constant guard, or she will, in return, run away with them, and make them captives to the God of Israel."

"O, brother!" cried the sister, "thou must not speak thus of thy gods that dwell in fire."

"My faith in our gods, my beloved sister, has always been weak and limited. This is not the result of indifference, for I have spared no pains in examining our theories; and on calm reflection, I fear we have no scheme that is worthy of our confidence. I have had some serious conversation on this point with the most eminent of our priests, and I find that even these men have but little faith in their own teachings. The theory of Perreeza, in regard to the creation of the world, and the origin of the race, seems to me a thousand times more rational than any theory I ever learned from our own theology."

Just now the two beauties rushed playfully into the apartment, and they were not more glad to see the officer than he was to see them.

"Ah, here again!" said the smiling father. "Thy Aunt Luzora, Jupheena, was somewhat apprehensive that the gods had been bewitched with your charms, and had stolen you away from the society of mortals. What thinks Perreeza of that?"

"I think," modestly replied the maid, "if the

gods are so very susceptible of impressions, that the majority of the maids of Babylon stand in imminent danger of being suddenly carried away."

"A fine compliment for the maids of Babylon, truly!" said Jupheena. "But, dear Perreeza, I trust the gods are in better business, than to be lurking around watching for an opportunity to run away with unoffending and unprotected damsels."

This from Jupheena, caused a burst of involuntary laughter from all present, and even Luzora was not able at this time to retain her gravity.

"Well, daughter," said the father, "we are to have the high pleasure, this evening, of a visit from our good friend Joram, and, at least, a part of his family. They appear to be deeply affected in the history of thy young friend here. I promise myself, at least, a very happy evening."

"It cannot be otherwise. Joram is highly intelligent and interesting; his wife, so amiable and mild; and his sons, so very lively and cheerful. I have had some conversation with Perreeza in regard to the family, and it will afford her great pleasure to meet them."

"I only wish," said the soldier, laughing heartily, "ye could have witnessed my friend Joram's animation when I mentioned Perreeza's 'harp of Judah' —he suddenly rose to his feet, as if under some

peculiar inspiration from the gods. Perreeza is destined to receive the name of some superior and favorite rose before the third hour of the night."

"She is already prepared for that part, father."

"Well, let us look for happy times; and let the 'harp of Judah' be well tuned, to charm us with its soul-thrilling tones."

CHAPTER XVI.

A LAY ON THE "HARP OF JUDAH," AND HOW THE SCENE ENDED.

At an early hour, Joram and one of his sons arrived at the house of Barzello. The other brother was away from the city; and the mother, owing to previous arrangements, was not able to attend. The sons of Joram, as has been already hinted, were youths of great personal beauty, and possessing genuine excellence of character. The one present at this time was the oldest, over whose head twenty years had just fled. His education was of the most finished, and he was fast becoming noted as a literary character. Like unto his father, his conversational powers were quite prominent and exceedingly pleasing. Among his contemporaries he was always a welcome guest and an universal favorite, and his smiles were considered more valuable than gold by many of the most superior maids of Babylon. His

brother was two years younger, and with that consideration, was not at all inferior to the other.

The merry laugh of Joram was soon heard resounding through those splendid halls, and Barzello was never known to be in better spirits. The son was conducted by Jupheena, with whom she had been familiarly acquainted for many years, to the end of the magnificent chamber, where Perreeza sat in company with Luzora.

"Maid of Judah," said Jupheena, smilingly, "I have the pleasure of presenting thee to the honorable acquaintance of my friend Mathias, the oldest son of our most excellent Joram, of whom thou hast heard us so frequently converse."

At the word, the maid arose with calm and lovely dignity, and appeared like an angel in human form, and gently bowed to the very low bow of the young Babylonian.

The conversation now became animated; in which Perreeza took an interesting part. Young Mathias conversed with all the warmth of his noble nature, and apparently without any effort, producing a very favorable impression on the mind of the maid of Judah.

"To me it is quite refreshing," said Perreeza, "to hear a name that is familiar in Israel. I have many relatives in Judah who are called by that name.

'*Mathias!*' Surely this, as far as it goes, is an unlooked for pleasure."

"Our national feelings are strong," said the young man, "and if I have learned correctly, this feeling is said to be stronger in the Hebrew heart than in all others; and surely this little item goes far to corroborate the truth of the saying."

"I am not so well prepared to vouch for the correctness of the sentiment," said Perreeza; "but if my own feelings on this point be an index to the feelings of others of my nation, the saying is abundantly true."

"It is certainly an admirable trait of character," said the young man, "and the individual in a foreign land, that can think of the land of his fathers without some peculiar emotions, is not, in my opinion, an individual to be envied."

"Permit the maid of Judah to thank her young friend for that noble sentiment."

"From a very early period in my life, I have, with peculiar interest, studied the manners, customs, and worship of your nation. My father, from some peculiar reasons, gave us to understand, that in order to gain and retain his love and favor, we were not to be negligent in regard to these studies; and nothing pleased him better than to witness our proficiency in this particular branch. This desire of our father

may be written down, peradventure, among his numerous peculiarities."

"Then our friend *Mathias*," said the young maid, placing peculiar emphasis on the name, "is not a stranger to the origin of our nation; I trust he is no more a stranger to our language."

"In common with other languages, we converse in Hebrew at home, for our own family amusement."

Here the conversation was arrested by the return of Jupheena, bearing the compliments of her father to Perreeza, requesting her presence in the other apartment. Perreeza smilingly obeyed, and leaving Mathias in the company of Luzora, the two damsels, hand in hand, entered into the presence of Barzello and his friend Joram.

"This is young Perreeza, of the royal line of Judah," said Barzello, taking the maid gently by the hand, "whom I have the great pleasure of presenting to my illustrious friend Joram."

The blushing maid modestly bowed, while Joram took her by the hand and said, with unusual feeling, "May the blessing of the God of thy fathers, dear maid, accompany thy footsteps in a foreign land."

This blessing from the lips of a Babylonian, quickly touched the already tender feelings of the maiden. It put her in mind of the soothing accents of Jere-

miah, and she dropped a tear on the bosom of her young friend.

"The 'Lily of the Valley,'" said Joram, "has found a sweet companion; and the maid of Judah, I trust, will not be displeased if, by the request of my good friend Barzello, I give her also the name of an appropriate rose."

"On the contrary," said Perreeza, "thy young handmaiden is very grateful to the noble friend of Barzello, for every token of his notice and kind regards."

"Then, maid of Judah," said Joram, "thy rose name, from this hour, is the *Rose of Sharon.*"

"The '*Rose of Sharon!*'" cried Jupheena; "oh, Perreeza, is not that delightful? '*Rose of Sharon!*'"

"Beautiful indeed!" said Perreeza, "and better than all, it is a sweet rose of my own native land."

"True, young maid, true," said Joram, "'tis the favorite rose of Judah."

"The noble friend of Barzello will accept the thanks of his unworthy young friend for his very happy compliment," said Perreeza.

"This is too much from the young maid of the royal line of Judah," said the delighted merchant; "one Hebrew lay, accompanied by the 'harp of Judah,' will recompense us for this a thousand times."

"That shall be attended to with pleasure;" and the two beauties left, and hastened to join Luzora and Mathias.

"Now, my good friend, what thinkest thou of the maid of Judah? Was my picture too highly colored?"

"Nay, Barzello. The 'Rose of Sharon' is all loveliness. Ah, my friend, sawest thou not the majestic glance of that dark eye—the inimitable hue of those fair cheeks—the full perfection of those lips—the glossy richness of those profuse curls—and the marble whiteness of that model neck? Add to this, my friend, the amiability of her character, and her ripe accomplishments, and in her we find a charming and suitable companion for the daughter of Barzello."

"Joram, are the Hebrew women noted in history for their beauty?"

"Perhaps no nation can boast of greater fairness of complexion among their females than the Jews. This, however, is far from being universal; but when you *do* find it, it is of the genuine stamp. In the days of my youth, my lot was cast in a place where I had the daily pleasure of beholding some of these Hebrew beauties—two in particular—they were sisters." (Here the voice of Joram betrayed emotion.) "Ah! my friend, they were fair as the

morning, and pleasant as the air of eventide! To-night, peradventure, they sleep with their fathers."

"And for one of these beauties," answered Barzello, pleasantly, "young Joram, peradventure, felt that strong affection which rises sometimes so spontaneously in the youthful heart?"

"Of that we may speak hereafter—but the image of one of them was brought painfully fresh to my mind, by gazing on those remarkable features of the young maid of Judah."

"Come, my friend, let us join the rest of the company in the other apartment; we are but few in number, let the conversation become general."

"Even so," replied Joram; and arm in arm they hastened to unite with the youthful group.

Here the conversation soon became animated, and so continued for the space of an hour; young Mathias rather leading, in a brilliant style. Perreeza was more animated than usual, and never were her talents exhibited to better advantage. Jupheena was very happy. Barzello was abundantly pleased. Joram, although less animated than usual, was deeply interested in the conversation, but found it impossible to keep his eyes from the fair features of Judah's maid. The night was somewhat advanced.

"If I mistake not," said Joram, "there is one capital enjoyment in reserve for us yet ere we part.

The youthful maid of the royal line of Judah will make us happy with one of her Hebrew melodies, noted throughout the musical world for their peculiar sweetness."

"It gives me much pleasure to add to the happiness of my friends. I fear my feeble voice will fail, but at the request of my kind friends I will comply."

"Permit me, fair damsel, to bring thee thy favorite harp," said Barzello, and he went to fetch it.

"My kind friend may well say, *favorite* harp," replied Perreeza, with deep emotion, "for to me, surely, it is a very precious treasure. For many years it has been in our family. To me it was left by the dearest of mothers, and to her it was given by a brother beloved, who found an early grave."

This was received by the company in silence. Joram suddenly put up his hand to his forehead, uttered a faint sigh, and retired to another part of the apartment.

By this time Barzello returned, bearing the favorite instrument. He placed it by the side of Perreeza, and silently took his seat.

Perreeza took the instrument in her arms, swept her delicate hand over the well-tuned strings, and after a moment's pause, which was a moment of breathless silence, in seraphic tones, she sang and

played a beautiful, plaintive melody, to the following words:

"Away from Israel's sunny vales,
And Salem's murmuring rills,
With a captive band, in a foreign land,
I'll think of Judah's hills:
Far—far away from those bright plains,
Where Tulah's feet do roam,
I'll strike my harp in plaintive strains,
And sing of friends and home.

"Jerusalem! thy lofty towers
Are ever dear to me;
Thy fountains bright and shady bowers,
In vain I long to see!
But dearer far to my throbbing heart,
The friends of my childhood days—
Those maidens kind, whom I left behind,
In the land of song and praise.

"There, side by side, in Salem's vaults,
My parents sweetly rest!
(No waves of gloom shall ever reach
The harbor of the blest!)
And there my mother's sister lies,
Who died in early bloom,
Serintha and Monroah now
Have reached their heavenly home.

"Adieu! adieu! my native land!
Thy vales I ne'er shall see;
But from Chaldea's mystic halls
I oft shall think of thee!
I'll ne'er forget thy flowery plains,
Nor a mother's cheerful dome;
But strike my harp in plaintive strains,
And sing of friends and home!"

And the thrilling vibrations of the harp of Judah died on the ear.

The performance and its effects were such that cheering compliments would have sounded ill-timed, and even harsh. There was in that chamber that silent awe that dares not move; and no one, for a length of time, felt any inclination to break the peculiar spell. Barzello gazed with solemn delight on Perreeza, as she laid by her harp and sat by the side of Jupheena, and laid her head caressingly on her bosom. Mathias sought in vain the eye of Barzello, in order to express his admiration by signs more eloquent than words. Jupheena gently kissed the "Rose of Sharon," resting on her bosom, and watering its tender petals with falling tears.

"But where is my friend Joram? Where is my good friend Joram?" inquired Barzello.

All eyes turned towards the seat on which he sat but a few moments before, but the seat was vacant,

and Joram was not to be found. When the harp of Judah was brought into the apartment, Joram was seen to leave his seat and inspect it for a moment, and then gently returned to the place he had left. He was not seen by any one when he left the apartment. Mathias thought he had merely gone to the other apartment, to admire the melody in his own peculiar, enthusiastic manner, where he could be free from all embarrassment. This brought a smile again to the circle. Barzello felt not quite at ease. He repeatedly saw in his friend Joram, on that night, peculiar signs of sadness; especially when he turned away from the harp, he saw that he was deeply affected. He therefore lost no time in making a search. He found him in the apartment they had left in the fore part of the night. There he reclined, with his head resting on the palm of his left hand, with an expression of countenance not easily depicted. Barzello was greatly alarmed.

"In the name of the gods, what has befallen my good friend?"

"Be calm," faintly replied the much agitated Joram; "give the young people no uneasiness on my account. I shall soon recover. Bring me a little cold water, and inform the company that we have some business of importance to transact, which will occupy our time for a while, and beg of them to excuse us."

Barzello hastened to comply with the wish of his friend, wondering within himself what would be the end of all these things. In a few moments he was again by the side of the mysterious Joram. The agitated man eagerly seized the cooling draught, and said—

"Now, my good friend Barzello, I shall feel refreshed. Be seated."

Barzello, now silent from astonishment, took his seat. Joram now arose, and for a moment paced the room in silence. He suddenly paused.

"Barzello! thou hast given me reason for these many years to believe that thou hast confidence in my moral integrity."

"My worthy friend is not in the least mistaken; and be assured that my confidence was never stronger in the true excellence of Joram than it is this moment. And have I not thy confidence in return?"

"Ah, my friend, thou hast; and that without reserve. And if an additional proof is needed, it is near at hand."

"The proofs are already abundant."

"Now, my good friend, let me proceed without any delay to give thee some reasons for my singular conduct at this time; and in making these developments, I am confident I shall share the sympathies of my kind friend:

"To-night my heart has been almost rent with peculiar contending emotions. I have been well-nigh overwhelmed with sadness and joy, mingled together in equal quantities. For twenty-eight years, my friend, I have been a resident of this great city. I came hither when in my twenty-first year. I am now forty-nine. I look much older—mark these grey hairs! During this long period, in the eyes of my fellow citizens, a degree of mystery has hung over myself and family, and even to-day my country and origin are not known. These have been hidden from my best friends—even Barzello among the rest. For many years past, however, I have had strong doubts in regard to the wisdom of this course of secrecy; but, having adopted it, I saw fit to carry it through. But, my friend, the period has at last arrived when my early history must be divulged, and my country made known—at least, to the house of Barzello; and from this hour I enjoin no secrecy on any thing pertaining to myself or family.

"In the first place, then, let me inform thee, that I am a Hebrew. Every drop of blood that courses through these veins is Hebrew blood. I was born of noble and wealthy parents, who lived within the suburbs of the great metropolis of Judah. I was an only son, and as such was over-indulged. I was the pride of my father, and by my mother I was

almost idolized. I was early instructed in the law of Jehovah, and at an early period I was taught that the God of Israel is the only true and living God —the great Creator of heaven and earth. I was of a lively temperament, fond of company, and over-fond of pleasure and amusements. I was sent to the heart of the city, to one of its first halls of learning, and found but little trouble in mastering my studies; and before I had reached my fifteenth year I was pronounced by all a very bright and promising lad. I was early thrown into the companionship of those who had not the fear of God before their eyes. I measurably drank in their spirit, and consequently the yoke of parental authority became painful to my youthful neck. My affection for parents and near relatives was strong, and it was not without many a struggle with a good conscience that I yielded to the enticements of older transgressors. My parents would often warn me against the society and influence of the wild and profligate; and while under the sound of their admonition, my heart would readily approve all their counsels of wisdom; but in the excitement of company, their words would soon be forgotten. Thus, gradually, I became the willing companion of those whose chief object was the gratification of their desires for hilarity and amusements. In all this I had not become wholly

negligent of my studies. My teachers, on this point, continued to send to my parents very favorable reports of my progressive proficiency in my various studies. Thus onward I went, sometimes the companion of the refined and the good, to whose society I could with a degree of proud satisfaction easily accommodate myself; and, sometimes, although not very openly, the companion of those who met together for the gratification of their depraved appetites.

"One night (I was then in my twentieth year) we tarried together until a late hour, and several of my young companions indulged freely in wines and strong drinks; and before we left the scene of our carousal they had become quite boisterous. On that ill-fated night I was more sedate than usual, and on that account I was jeered repeatedly by my young companions. We all left together, and at that late hour entered into one of the most prominent streets of the city. It was all quiet—its inhabitants wrapt in slumber. One of our company soon broke forth into a merry bacchanalian song, while others answered with a boisterous laugh. This shamefu. disturbance brought to the spot two of the city guards or watchmen. To their praise be it spoken, they addressed us in becoming language, and gave us to understand that such conduct at that late hour of the night was not to be tolerated, and gave us

orders, if we had any regard for our safety, to go quietly to our respective homes.

"This was good advice, and if the company had been governed by any share of good sense, it would have answered a good purpose. But my companions were inflamed with wine, and therefore prepared for any outrage. The same one again broke forth in drunken song, while all the rest, except myself, joined in a daring and boisterous laugh, and defied the power of the watchmen. On seeing this, both of the watchmen rushed upon two of our leaders, and at the same time gave signals of alarm. The young men drew their swords, but the experienced hands of the watchmen proved too powerful for them, and soon their blades, in shivered fragments, tinkled on the pavement.

"Seeing my companions thus powerless, in the heat of the moment, I drew my sword, rushed to the conflict, and fearlessly faced one of the faithful watchmen. For a while I stood my ground well; but my sword was soon shivered to fragments. I caught the eye of my antagonist. I knew him—he knew me.

"'Ah, indeed,' said he, in an undertone, with his firm grasp upon my throat, 'and the accomplished son of the rich Salome takes part with desperadoes and villains, does he? But haste thee home, rash

youth, and remember my regard for thy father's family. To-morrow, flee to parts unknown, for bitter indeed will be the punishment of thy comrades! Haste thee away; and let not the father witness the disgrace of his son.'

The words of the watchman sank deep into my heart. With troubled feelings, I hastened to my father's dwelling. Thou hast heard me speak this night of the beauty and loveliness of two Hebrew maidens with whom I was acquainted in the days of my youth. These were my two sisters—pardon this weakness, my good friend. Although a late hour of the night, these lovely beings had not retired to rest. There they sat in anxious solicitude for the return of their erring brother. I entered the house. Soon they saw, by my pale countenance, that something unusual had befallen me. The elder was soon by my side.

"'What calamity hath befallen by dear Esrom?' cried my trembling sister.

"'Be calm, sweet Serintha,' I replied, 'and I will tell you all.'

"I then informed them that with others, my companions, I had been guilty of taking up arms against the civil authorities—a crime punished with great severity—and that night I must leave my home. These startling disclosures brought from both of my

sisters a wild cry of agony; they fell on my neck and implored me to tarry. But my mind was firmly fixed. I told them I could never be disgraced in the presence of my relatives. I gathered together a few articles of clothing, while my sisters followed me with their painful sobs. There was no time to lose. I was soon ready. My youngest sister, Monroah, fell on my neck, whilst a shower of tears fell from those large dark eyes. I was deeply affected, and could utter but a few broken words. My favorite harp stood by my side:

"'Take this, my sweet Monroah,' I said, in trembling accents, and 'whenever thy hand shall strike its chords of melody, remember that thou art loved with all the strong affection of a brother's heart. And now, in the presence of Jehovah, I make the solemn vow, that from this hour I shall reform my ways.'

"I then kissed those lovely beings for the last time! and, with a burning brow, I rushed out of my father's house and commenced my weary flight.

"Time would fail me, my good friend, to recount all my trials and privations among strangers, before I reached the great metropolis of Chaldea, but let me assure thee that they were many. But that solemn vow has never been broken. Never, from that day, has wine or strong drinks touched my lips.

Thou art well acquainted with my history, from my first arrival in Babylon down to the present time, and I have been *justly* marked down as a singular character. Thou wilt be astonished, peradventure, while I assure thee, that in Judah they never found my whereabouts, and the course I marked out for myself in Babylon left me no judicious opportunity to inquire for them. I fear now, that this is a grand mistake of the past; but the years have fled, and they are not to be recalled. During this long period I have secretly loved and cherished the memories of Judah, and I daily worship the God of my fathers. My wife is a native of Judah, and my children are well versed in Hebrew literature. By this time thou art better able to appreciate my warmth this day in conversing about the maid of Judah. Gladly, indeed, was the invitation of my friend accepted, and my heart was buoyant in the anticipation of the great pleasure of the evening. The sweet damsel was kindly presented to my notice. Her grace and beauty were never surpassed. But, my good Barzello!"—here the merchant paused, with deep emotion—"pardon this weakness. In those features I could trace the very image of my sister Monroah! Even then it required an effort to keep myself within respectable bounds. I partially conquered my feelings, and endeavored to persuade

myself that it was but a fancy. But judge of my feelings, my good friend, on hearing these words from her lips, after thou hadst left the apartment to bring her what thou then didst call her 'favorite harp'—her words were these: 'My kind friend may well say "*favorite harp*," for, to me, surely it is a precious treasure. For many years it has been in our family. It was left to me by the dearest of mothers, and it was left to her by a brother beloved, who found an early grave!' Judge again of my feelings, when I recognized in that instrument *my own* 'favorite harp,' which, as a last token of affection, I gave to my sister Monroah on the very night I left home! And, O God of my fathers! that song! It well-nigh tore my heart from its centre—

'Serintha and Monroah now
Have reached their heavenly home!'

I could hear no more! With trembling limbs and a throbbing brow I succeeded in reaching this apartment; and thus it appears that, after an absence of twenty-eight years from all my fond relatives, I have the thrilling pleasure of meeting the lovely daughter of my own beloved sister Monroah! The youthful maid of the royal line of Judah, in a strange land, is about to be clasped to the arms of her

uncle Esrom, and share the society of her aunt and cousins." Joram's narrative was at an end.

By this time it was not an easy matter to decide which of the two was most affected. Barzello was moved to tears, and, for a while, this was all the response he could make. At last he broke out:

"Praised be the gods! or if it pleases my friend Joram better, praised be the God of Israel! This is, indeed, a singular providence, and a happy one in its final results. But there is another part of this affair that thou art not acquainted with, and I gladly hasten to make it known. To this, thy niece, there are in Babylon three brothers and a cousin, as noble specimens of dignified humanity as ever thy friend Barzello had the pleasure of communing with."

"And where are *they?*" cried Joram, suddenly rising to his feet.

"They are taken, by order of the king, and placed under Ashpenaz, to be taught in all the learning and wisdom of the Chaldeans, and if they do not soon outstrip their comrades thy friend will be greatly disappointed."

"All hail!" cried Joram. "May Jehovah prosper them! But, my good friend, how is this to terminate? How shall this be disclosed to the maid of Judah and the young men?"

"My advice in the matter is this. Let them be made acquainted with it without delay. Let Perreeza know it immediately; and I will assure my worthy friend that to her it will be overwhelmingly joyful. What sayest thou?'

"In this I will be governed by my worthy friend."

"Then let the young company be called together, and let Joram proceed as his superior wisdom may dictate."

The three were immediately called to the apartment, which had been so long occupied by Barzello and Joram. They were asked to be seated.

"My good friend Joram," said Barzello, with a pleasant smile on his countenance, "desires a little more conversation with his young friend from Judah; and it will surely yield much pleasure to us all."

The words of Joram will certainly give us much pleasure. In regard to my own, I fear they will add but little to the pleasure of the evening."

"Be assured, fair damsel, that we shall not only be pleased, but also greatly profited by the words of thy mouth: peradventure, it may be interesting to thee to know that, like thyself, I am a native of Judah. My youthful feet frequented the courts of the Lord's house in our beloved Jerusalem!"

Perreeza uttered a joyous exclamation; rose to her feet for a moment, gazed on the countenance of Joram, sat down, and replied:

"Joyful news, indeed, in a strange land! And may I ask how long is it since the honorable friend of Barzello left his native hills?"

"Twenty-eight years have passed away since these eyes have gazed on the far-famed mountains of Israel; and many who were there, hale and vigorous, have been gathered to their fathers, and are now calmly sleeping in the embrace of death?"

"Perhaps," said the maid, with a trembling voice, "that my noble friend was acquainted with some, in the days of his youth, with whom I have had some acquaintance in my native land. I have had some illustrious relatives in Judah, who were in the flower of their youth twenty-eight years ago."

"The maid of Judah will please to mention some of her nearest relatives."

"My father's name was Amonober, a brother of my illustrious uncle, King Josiah, whose happy reign shed such universal glory over all Israel."

"And thou art the daughter of young Amonober, thou blessed of the Lord!" said Joram, with a degree of emotion, which he strove in vain to hide. "Many a happy day have we spent together during the sunny hours of childhood."

Here the maid of Judah burst into tears, and so did that lovely being that clung so closely to her side, and so did the brave soldier, and so did Mathias; Joram was the only one at this time sufficiently nerved for the conflict.

"The maid of Judah has kindly informed me of her relatives on her father's side, I would be happy to hear of her relatives on the side of her mother, and then I shall be duly bound to inform her in return of my own ancestors."

"Thy young handmaiden is the grand-daughter of the once rich and influential Salome. He had two daughters, Serintha and Monroah. I am the daughter of Monroah, the younger, who left me an orphan eight years ago, and was quietly laid by the side of her husband, in the burial place of their fathers."

"Ah, dear damsel!" cried Joram, "let me assure thee that both Serintha and Monroah were the companions of my childhood days. Daily they played with me at my father's house, and daily I played with them at their father's house; and precious is their memory to this bosom."

Here again the maid of Judah burst into tears, and so did the rest of the company, except Joram. He was nerved for the conflict.

"And they had a brother," continued Joram. "Did not my young friend often hear from her

mother about her brother Esrom, who suddenly left the city, and who was given up as dead?"

"Ah!" replied the damsel, "from her quivering lips, "we often listened to the sad story of our Uncle Esrom, who left for parts unknown, and soon fell to an early grave."

"Be assured, fair Perreeza," said Joram, "that I know more of the history of thy Uncle Esrom than any other being, except the God that knoweth all things. I left the city of Jerusalem on that same night, and am fully prepared to say that he still liveth."

Here again Perreeza uttered an exclamation of joy:

"O, most precious Joram! Is my Uncle Esrom still alive? If so, where is he? O, where is he?"

"Let the maid of Judah be calm, and she will soon learn of her Uncle Esrom. I trust she is already aware of the circumstances under which he left. In consequence of being found in a wild company, he was led, in the heat of the moment, to draw his sword against a city officer, in defence of an unworthy comrade. This he knew would be punished with extreme severity; and to escape being disgraced in the presence of his family, on that very night he fled. Before he left, he vowed, in the presence of his God, to lead a reformed life. He

thought it advisable, from the nature of circumstances, to change his name. For nearly twenty-eight years he has been a citizen of Babylon. In the providence of the Almighty he has been greatly prospered. To-night he is the welcome guest of his friend Barzello—and now, thou precious child of my angelic Sister Monroah, hasten to the arms of thine own Uncle Esrom!"

One wild cry of joy, and the maid of Judah fell, senseless, into the arms of her uncle.

Then showers of tears fell from all eyes. The "Lily of the Valley" wept for joy, and so did the brave soldier, and so did young Mathias; and Joram, at this time, was not sufficient for the conflict. His tears fell profusely, and so did his warm caresses on the fair cheek of the "Rose of Sharon."

CHAPTER XVII.

WHERE A YOUNG IDOLATRESS IS LED TO THE SHRINE OF THE KING OF KINGS.

JECONIAH, the vain youth whom Nebuchadnezzar placed on the throne of Judah, in a few weeks, in conformity with the fears and expectations of the faithful, became exceedingly wicked and profligate, and lost no time in planning mischievous plots against the real worshippers of Jehovah. He followed in all the footsteps of his guilty and ill-fated father, and even surpassed him in high daring acts of wickedness. His officers were selected from among the most unprincipled of his father's counsellors, and to these he saw fit to add a large number of his young comrades in iniquity. Filled with vanity, puffed up with pride, and deceived by the flattery of his pretended friends, he thought his mountain strong. The royal palace presented one continual scene of hilarity and drunken mirth. The devout worshippers of the God of Israel were ridi-

culed and laughed to scorn, while the name of Jehovah was blasphemed. Soldiers were greatly multiplied, and the weak-minded monarch vainly believed that Jerusalem was able to withstand the attack from the legions of the East. The Chaldean minister was often insulted by the drunken peers of Judah's courtiers.

The keen eye of the Babylonian saw that some measures of importance were on the eve of transpiring. From day to day new fortifications were thrown up with great dispatch, and every thing indicated plainly that Jeconiah was preparing for war.

These movements were soon known at the great metropolis of Chaldea, and their minister at Jerusalem received instructions to demand of the King of Babylon an explanation of his movements. This was attended to without delay, and in due form, on the part of the Chaldean minister. He requested an interview with the king, and it was granted. He found him in a reclining posture in the midst of splendor and grandeur. His countenance was pale and haggard, his eyes heavy and bloodshot; his hair hung in tangled masses. To all intents and purposes he had the appearance of one fresh from deep debauchery. He cast on the Chaldean a careless, scornful glance, and in an irritable tone demanded to know his business.

"I have sought the presence of the King of Judah in obedience to the orders of my sovereign master the King of Babylon."

"And what has thy sovereign master the King of Babylon to say to me?" growlingly inquired Jeconiah.

"His communications are of the utmost importance to the King of Judah," replied the Chaldean, in a decisive tone.

"I am in no mood this morning for long speeches. If thou hast aught to communicate thou hadst better proceed."

"First, then, my sovereign master desires to know why his minister at the court of Judah receives such cold and insulting treatment at the hands of the king and his courtiers. But two short months have transpired since by the clemency of my lord the King of Babylon thou wast set on the throne of Judah. At that time didst thou not promise fidelity to the measures established by my sovereign master? But ere four weeks had elapsed the name of the King of Babylon was a by-word of derision and reproach in thy royal banquets; while his minister was laughed to scorn. This indignity to the name of my sovereign and to the person of his representative is not to be tolerated, and it may be well for the King of Judah to remember that he is treading on dangerous ground."

"Empty thyself thoroughly," said Jeconiah, with a flushed countenance.

"And moreover," resumed the minister, "my great master desires to know what meaneth this great mustering of men of war, and the fortifying process which is continually carried onward. Such things have at least a suspicious appearance, and we demand to know what it is that calls for all these sudden and peculiar performances."

"In regard to thy first insolent inquiry," said the king, in an angry tone, "let me say that the king and nobles of Judah feel themselves under no obligations to the King of Babylon. We look upon him as an arrogant usurper, and no longer do we acknowledge his authority. And moreover we consider ourselves in no wise flattered by the presence of his minister. In regard to thy second inquiry, thou mayest inform thy master that if ever again he marches his army before the walls of Jerusalem he shall find out the meaning of these things to his entire satisfaction. As we have no particular need of thy services at Jerusalem, it may be well for thee in person to convey the information to thy illustrious sovereign the King of Babylon."

"I am happy to know that the King of Judah is not equivocal," replied the Chaldean, with a disdainful smile. "And in regard to the utility of my leaving the city, I consider his argument wholly

conclusive, and without delay I shall profit thereby. Those items of business I am compelled to leave unfinished shall be attended to hereafter, when the banners of Chaldea shall again float in triumph on the lofty towers of Judah's capital."

"I defy thy master's power," cried Jeconiah, trembling with anger.

With a proud, steady step the Chaldean left the presence of the vain and conceited King of Judah.

The Babylonian lost no time in transmitting to his sovereign the result of his interview with the King of Judah, and no time was lost at the metropolis of Chaldea in preparing for a vigorous retaliation. A grand council was called, on which occasion the king appeared in person before his numerous war officers. Here they received instructions to prepare without delay to march their legions before the walls of Jerusalem and punish the audacity of the unfaithful and deceitful Jeconiah.

The great city of Babylon once more presented one grand exciting scene of military display. War-chariots rumbled along, and the heavy tramp of the spirited charger made the earth tremble. The loud blast of the trumpet echoed on the high turrets. The gorgeous banners proudly waved on the city walls while the welkin rang with the enthusiastic shouts of the excited populace. The king, drawn in

a superb chariot, passed through the glittering ranks of his brave warriors, while "O king, live for ever!" vibrated at once from ten thousand tongues.

Early on the morrow they were to be on a rapid march for the plains of Judah; and every soldier's heart beat high with characteristic joy.

Closeted together in a certain apartment, in the house of Barzello, sat our two young friends, the "Lily of the Valley" and the "Rose of Sharon," or the sweet Jupheena and the lovely Perreeza. To-day hilarity was not an inmate of that house, and mirth for the time being had taken her departure. Jupheena looked sorrowful, and tears were struggling for an admissionin to the "wide world" through the dark eyelashes of the maid of Judah.

"We must not be over sorrowful, my dearest Jupheena. This storm again will soon pass over. Let us bear it with becoming fortitude, and cast our care upon Jehovah."

"Dear Perreeza! in every affliction *thou* art able to find sweet consolation in thy God; and Jehovah appears to be thy strength. But, alas, for thy poor Jupheena, she has no God on whom to roll her burden! O, Perreeza, I have no faith in the imaginary gods of Chaldea; and what succor can I dare expect, as a stranger, from thy God, or the God of the Hebrews? Alas! *Jupheena has no God in the world!*"

"Speak not thus, dear Jupheena," said Perreeza, fondly kissing her weeping companion. "Our God is the great Creator of all. It is true, that Judah is his favorite; but remember, He is Lord of all; and wherever He sees a pure heart, he loves it, whether on the hills of Judah or on the plains of Babylonia; and whoever turns to Him from the worship of idols, will secure His favor and receive His smile. Ah, my precious friend, in this God Perreeza rejoices from day to day. He is the rock of my salvation. In Him I trust. I love Jehovah, and in return He smiles and loves Perreeza; and when I die, He will send His holy angels to carry me to His holy city above, where the happy spirits of my parents await to welcome Perreeza to her new home in Heaven."

"Ah! happy indeed is the maid of Judah in the favor of her God! She feels the rock beneath her feet, and why should *she* fear? But, alas, for her young friend; she finds nothing of solidity to stand upon. Constantly she finds herself sinking—sinking—sinking—whither, she knows not! O, Perreeza, *I have no God!*"

"Jehovah will be thy God, O precious Jupheena! He will receive thee with open arms! He will not suffer thee to sink in despair. Let the last link that binds thee to other gods be broken. Become a true worshipper of the only Jehovah, and He will glad-

den thy heart. Then thou shalt find thy feet established on the rock, and look forward with bright hopes beyond the vale of death."

"I renounce all gods but the God that made the world!" cried the Chaldean maid. "Oh, for something to fill this aching void!" (laying her hand on her bosom.) "From this hour I seek the face of Perreeza's God."

"In humble reverence let us bow before Him," said the maid of Judah, "and the offering of a contrite heart he will not despise."

The youthful maidens, in solemn attitude, prostrated themselves before the shrine of Jehovah. In the arms of love and faith Perreeza presented her young companion to the kind regards of the God of Israel. She cried to God in her behalf. She became eloquent in her pleadings. Jupheena in silence made a pure consecration of herself to that God for whom, although to her an "unknown God," she had longed from an early childhood. It was a solemn moment. With emotions of delight, angels paused to witness the scene; and Jehovah, well pleased with the offering, accepted it. Another name was written in the book of life, and on swift wing an angel of consolation was sent to earth to whisper in the mind of the Chaldean maid, that she had prevailed with the Almighty. They arose from their kneeling

posture. A smile of serenity rested on the fair countenance of the soldier's daughter. Her once aching heart was healed, her spirit had found its long-sought rest, and her feet firmly stood on the eternal rock. She fell on the neck of the maid of Judah, and gave her one long, loving embrace.

"Happy is that people whose God is the Lord," said Perreeza.

"And happy is that person that leads a dark idolator to the shrine of the King of kings," replied Jupheena.

"This calling away of thy father to the land of Judah, dear Jupheena, has not taken me by surprise. We were given to understand, before we left Jerusalem, that the reign of Jeconiah would be but short, and that the city would again fall into the hands of the Chaldeans. All this we learned from the lips of Jeremiah, the Prophet of the Almighty. Yea, Jerusalem, for the high daring iniquity of her rulers, must fall into the hands of the Gentiles. May God protect his true worshippers from the vengeance of the foe, and——"

A servant knocked at the door of their apartment, and informed them that Barzello was below, and desired to see them without any delay.

They hurried into another apartment, where the officer, in full uniform, was waiting to receive them.

"To-morrow morning we again leave the city," said the officer, with a firm voice. "The tributary King of Judah has rebelled, and has openly insulted our minister. For this, he must be called to an account. The orders of the king are at this time very strong and rigid, and I fear that many innocent ones will suffer for the madness of the guilty dignitaries of Judah. To witness the departure of our troops, to fight against her native land and her native city, must be peculiarly painful to my young friend from Judah; but let her be assured that to her friend Barzello, and even to the King of Babylon, this movement is far from being pleasant; but it must be attended to, or the honor of Chaldea must fall to the dust."

"Let not my kind protector feel any embarrassment on my account," said Perreeza, with a grateful smile; "this is no more than I expected. I look upon the movement as emanating from Jehovah, to punish the wickedness of the ruling men of Judah, who fear not the Lord, nor regard the interests of the nation. I have but one favor to ask of my noble friend. Throw thy arms of protection around the house of my Aunt Josepha. She is the mother of my Cousin Daniel; and with her thou wilt find two lovely maidens, Sharonah and Tulah, my beloved cousins. They live in a superb mansion, in the

vicinity of the Lord's Temple. If our kind Barzello will please to see them, they will be highly gratified to hear from the captive youths of Judah, and also from thine unworthy young friend."

"I shall be glad, indeed, to add to the happiness of any of Perreeza's friends; and I will certainly bear it in mind; and I am well pleased to carry back to your relatives in Judah such favorable information concerning their relatives in Babylon. I trust we shall make short work of it, and greet you again in Chaldea after a few months. Keep good courage while I am absent. Let your evenings be spent at home, unless accompanied by my sister Luzora. I have business to call me away immediately. I am summoned to the presence of the king, and must attend to important items throughout the night. I therefore must bid you adieu."

And the soldier kissed the fair cheeks of the two damsels, hastened into his chariot, and was quickly conveyed to the presence of the great monarch of Chaldea.

The next morning witnessed the departure of the grand army from Babylon. In a few days its legions were seen encamped before the walls of Jerusalem. This second surrendering of the city is not so closely connected with the interest of our story as the first, under Jehoiakim; we shall not, therefore, enter

into minute details. Suffice it to say, that after a short resistance the city surrendered, and Jeconiah was made a prisoner.

True to his promise, Barzello sought the house of the amiable Josepha, and cheered her sorrowful heart, by his glowing discription of her son and his three comrades, together with the "Rose of Sharon."

"They are in the hands of Jehovah, whom they have served from their infancy," said Josepha, "and I trust that those lessons imparted to their juvenile minds will prove useful to them in maturer age. It was a bitter pang to me, and these my daughters, to lose Daniel; but we submissively bowed before the majesty of Him who is too wise to err. I may never see him more. I find that the storms of life are fast wafting me to the eternal shores, and that I shall soon arrive in that land, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. To thee, most kind Barzello, we are chiefly indebted for the happy condition and brilliant prospects of my son and relatives, in a foreign climate; and now for the first, as well as for the last time, receive the thanks and blessing of a widow for thy kindness to the fatherless and the motherless. May Jehovah with His wing shield thy head in the day of battle. May His blessing crown thy household. May thy dear and only daughter be the consolation

of thy declining years. May thy paths be strewed with the flowers of consolation, and, even in idolatrous Chaldea, may the knowledge of the God of Israel break upon thy understanding, and win thy affections; and may thy dying moments be cheered with the smiles of the God of Abraham. Thou wilt convey to my son the deep-swelling love of an affectionate mother and fond sisters. Tell him that he continually lives in our fond and grateful memories. We think of him at early dawn, at noon, and at night. Though far away, he still continues the grand centre of our joy and bliss. Our prayers, in his behalf, daily ascend to the God of Israel, with the smoke of our morning and evening sacrifices, and, if never more to meet on earth, we shall be united in the better land."

The noble Chaldean made an effort to reply, but found himself peculiarly deficient in vocal powers; and, after having bidden them an affectionate adieu, he hastily withdrew, and found some relief in being alone.

The Chaldean army, together with five thousand Hebrew captives, were soon on their way towards Babylon, Jeconiah, and Sherakim, the orator, being chained together, and bound to one of the royal chariots.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH "MUSHROOM ARISTOCRACY" GETS A ROUGH HANDLING.

At the school, agreeable to the expectations of Barzello, the four Hebrews made astonishing progress in their multiform studies. Those profound sciences, which had cost their teachers such years of ceaseless toil, were, by these four young men, mastered with apparent ease. They soon became objects of wonder to their instructors, and were pronounced peculiar favorites of the gods. Ashpenaz often would have an interview with them, and soon they became the objects, not only of his admiration, but also of his friendship and kind regards. This soon became visible to their fellow-students, and jealousy, accompanied by malice, found a ready entrance to more than one heart. Alas, for poor fallen humanity!

Among the students from the city of Babylon there were two young men, brothers, whose father, by a sudden freak of fortune, had arrived at the

possession of much wealth. For some years these young men's advantages had been quite favorable, and withal they had not been negligent in their studies. They were exceedingly vain of their acquirements, and their pride and arrogance kept pace with their vanity. The success of others, to them, was invariably a source of deep mortification. It may be thought strange, that any individual, of this arrogant, selfish stamp, could ever be satisfied with the success of his counterpart, and that they envied not one another. This can be accounted for in no other way than by saying, that their high conceit of their family distinction made them a kind of unit; and each looked at the success of his fellow as a sure way to enhance his own individual consequence; and so they were joined together in a copartnership of extreme selfishness.

They had already heard some complimentary reports of the youths of Judah from no mean sources, and from that moment they became their foes; and were determined to see them humbled. As students, they met but seldom, and the real acquirements of the Israelitish youths were not known to these envious Chaldeans. With these two victims of vanity and envy was cast the unhappy lot of another youth, who had the misfortune to be their cousin. He was of "humbler birth," as the

term is used, but almost infinitely their superior in everything that beautifies and adorns humanity. He was frank, generous, noble, and endowed wih no small share of natural wit. For his conceited cousins he was anything but a pleasant companion; and daily was their arrogance rebuked by his far-searching repartees. They would have gladly dispensed with his company, and he would have as gladly changed his quarters, but this was out of their respective jurisdiction, and thus things remained. This youth was far from being unhappy. He largely possessed such a combination of good qualities as rendered him comparatively happy under all circumstances. Thus have we introduced to the reader three young Chaldeans, Scribbo and Shagoth, with their Cousin Apgomer, who are to figure somewhat throughout this, and some of the following chapters.

"I cannot, for my part," said Scribbo, "see the propriety of elevating these contemptible captives to share equal privileges with the native sons of Chaldea. Surely the king, in this, has betrayed a lamentable lack of discernment."

"Truly!" replied Shagoth, with an air of consequence. "And if he does not ere long see his folly, and retrace his steps, he will lose *my* confidence, and that of all the members of our house."

"May the gods pity the king!" cried Apgomer, with a feigned solemn visage. "Peradventure, that in the great pressure of business he forgot that the confidence of my illustrious cousins was so essential to his well being, as well as the safety and perpetuity of the empire."

"My remarks were called forth by the sensible statement of my brother," said Shagoth, peevishly; "and it would have been perfectly excusable in thee to have remained silent, until I should have thought fit to make some remarks suitable to the capacity of thy mind."

"My worthy cousin will, I trust in the plenitude of his overflowing generosity, pardon the officiousness of his unworthy servant of limited capacities, and believe him, when he assures thee, that those remarks were offered as an humble apology for the great sovereign of the Chaldean empire; and I still hope that, in the richness of thy clemency, thou wilt forgive him."

"I trust," replied Scribbo, "we are able to appreciate thy remarks, and undoubtedly they will receive the respect they deserve. If thou couldst have thy quarters removed to the society of these pretending foreigners, me thinks it would better suit thy grovelling taste."

"Such a sudden bereavement might be more than

my tender-hearted cousins could well endure. May the gods forbid that I should be the means of overwhelming you with unnecessary sorrow! And, besides, I fear I am not such a favorite of the gods as to receive such a marked favor."

"A prodigious favor to be the companions of illiterate captives!" cried Scribbo, with a disdainful curl of his lip. "The Chaldean who calls that a favor, is anything but an ornament to his country."

"We may have different tastes in regard to ornament," replied the good-natured cousin, looking with an arch smile on his cousin's heavy and useless jewelry. "As for me, I am a plain young man. I value the useful far above the ornamental. I consider healthy ablutions and clean linens far more desirable than the decoration of our persons with ornamental trash. And why may it not be so in the government? So much in regard to *ornaments*. 'Ignorant and illiterate captives.' Ah, cousin! Believest thou this? Dost thou not rather hope that this is so? Hope on! The day of trial hastens apace! Hope vigorously and diligently; for such hope is of short duration. Ye expect, by your superior learning, to humble the youths of Judah in the presence of the king and his nobles. Ye are sanguine in your expectations. Already ye see their heads bowing with shame and embarrassment,

while your own brows are decorated with well-earned laurels. Do ye not already enjoy the bliss of the prophetic vision, until the bursting in of the reality? Ah, ye do! Now think it not over-officious in your cousin, of low capacity, to assure you that your hopes are but the baseless fabrics of vain minds. The day of examination will reveal to your astonished sensibilities, that ye have dreamed the dream of fools. Those noble young men, who are the objects of your hatred, will soar above you triumphantly, and their enemies will be covered over with shame. Let me give you fair warning! Ye are ignorant of the strength of those youths, over whom your vain imaginations appear to triumph with such ease."

"Our forbearance, brother, I fear, only encourages the insolence of this, our ungrateful relative," said Shagoth, in anger. "How soon these upstarts forget their poverty when they are permitted to mingle in good society."

"And how soon they forget the kind hands that lifted them up from their low estate," answered Scribbo, casting a reproachful glance in the direction of Apgomer.

"Now, cousins," said Apgomer, smilingly, "since these charges are thrown out against me, without going through the usual form of asking permission,

I shall at once take the liberty of repelling them.

"In the first place, I am charged with being an 'upstart,' and of too soon forgetting my poverty. This I deny. I have, by no means, forgotten my own poverty, or the low condition of my ancestors. Let us look at this for a moment. Painful as it may be, I believe ye do occasionally admit that I am your cousin. Well, then, be it remembered that I am your cousin. Our fathers were brothers, and our grandfather was one and the same person. It is well known to you, that our respected grandsire was an individual who had to plod his way along through the very steeps of poverty, and procure a little bread for his family by very humble and low employments. In poverty he lived, and in deep poverty he would have died, had it not been for the grateful regard of *one* of his sons; of the other, I have nothing to say at present. Now to some, who have suddenly risen from poverty to a degree of respectability, it proves a source of deep mortification, to remember that they sprang from a low origin. But is this the case with your cousin Apgomer? Have I forgotten the source of deep poverty from whence I sprang? Does it create a blush on this cheek, to remember that my grandfather was poor, and that my father had to win his

bread through the sweat of his brow? Whoever has forgotten the poverty of his father and grandfather, be it known that Apgomer is not that youth.

"So much in regard to the first charge. Now for the second. I am accused of forgetting those 'kind friends, who lifted me up from my low estate.' Those friendly hands who helped me to the situation I now hold are, by no means, forgotten; they are deeply graven upon a grateful memory. While this pulse shall beat, and while this heart shall throb, the names of Barzello and Joram will, by me, be fondly cherished. Then there was much opposition from certain quarters. There were those who could not discern the propriety of my being elevated to an equality with those of greater wealth; and I am not sure, since the king has not seen fit to retrace his steps, but that he has lost the confidence of those concerned. Cousins! I am ever grateful to those kind friends, who so nobly took me by the hand. I know well who they are, and I know well who they are not."

"Surely our young instructor is becoming eloquent," said Scribbo, rather crest-fallen.

"Yea, verily," replied his brother; "and who can withstand such a mighty torrent of oratory? Let us away to the groves!" And Apgomer was left, for the time being, the sole occupant of the apartment.

On this day these vain ones had listened to more wholesome truth than they had heard for many a day. Never before had their cousin spoken so plainly; and they were, indeed, alarmed in witnessing the perfect ease with which their insinuations and foul charges were handled. Hitherto he had been satisfied in checking their vanity by an occasional remark; but their continued taunts in regard to the youths of Judah so aroused his noble feelings, that he spoke forth in their defence. He had learned favorable reports of them from Barzello, and although to them personally a stranger, such was the warmth of his regards for the noble soldier, that he found it no task to admire those whom *he* admired.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH A "MOST RESPECTABLE FAMILY" IS GREATLY DISAPPOINTED.

Days, weeks, months, and years, have passed away, and the great day of examination has arrived. That day for which that youthful group has looked so long, with mingled feelings of pleasure and embarrassment. This day broke on the capital of Chaldea with unusual brightness. The refulgent orb shone brightly in a cloudless firmament, and Nature had put on her sweetest smile, to welcome the grand "triumph of Truth." In the vicinity of the king's palace, it was evident that something of more than ordinary interest was on that day to be attended to. Officers hurried to and fro. Dignitaries bowed to one another with additional smiles. Groups of citizens of the better class appeared here and there, in earnest conversation. Magnificent chariots, drawn by fiery steeds, halted at the king's gate about the third hour. A splendid national flag proudly waved

on the high pinnacle of the students' building, whilst each window presented ingenious mottoes appropriate for the occasion.

The place appointed by the king for the public examination of the students, was a magnificent audience-room that stood within the royal grounds, and in close proximity to the palace. This apartment was finished in the highest perfection of art, and in addition, on this occasion, was highly decorated with ornaments suitable only for the day. To this Hall the students were conducted in regular form, at an early hour; and no pains were spared by their instructors, to have them appear to the best possible advantage; and in addition to this (for the reader is aware that they were comely), the students themselves vied with each other for the mastery in personal appearance, as well as in literary qualifications and accomplishments.

At an early stage, the room was well filled with the first of Babylon's aristocracy, together with some few who had no just claim to that ancient title. Appropriate seats were reserved for the king and his attendants, who were soon expected to make their appearance. Among the number assembled together at this time, there were many of the students' parents. With but two or three exceptions, unadulterated joy and good feeling appeared to be the

expression of every countenance; while, with hearts free from envy and malice, they gazed on the comely forms of those before them. Among these smiling countenances might have been seen three individuals —they smiled, indeed, but their smiles would never have convinced the beholder that they were an index to noble and generous hearts. There was in these smiles a foul admixture of pride, vanity, and discontent. These were a father, mother, and daughter. Their attire was of the most costly, but in taste most horrible—overdone in every particular, and presenting a strange contrast to the elegant simplicity that surrounded them. They carried on a rapid conversation in rather a loud whisper.

"'Twas a strange notion of the king, surely," said the daughter, "to bring these Hebrew captives in competition with the refined minds of Chaldea; I cannot account for it, unless it is purposely done to show them their great inferiority; and thus, by to-day's exercises, teach them a lesson of humility that they will not soon forget; for no one can be so unwise as to think that such illiterate foreigners can appear to any advantage in a place like this."

"Thy remarks, daughter, are perfectly correct," answered the mother. "I am at a loss myself, to understand the king in this. But thy brother, Shageth, has learned, of late, that these Jews are far

from being dull scholars; and he fears that, by some strange contrivance, they have worked themselves into the graces of Ashpenaz. I have my fears that these reports are too true. Yet I have my strong hopes that, in this trial of learning, they will fall entirely below thy accomplished brothers. I am quite sure it cannot be otherwise."

"Mother! look at that hateful Apgomer," said the daughter, with a curl of the lip which she could not hide; "there is another specimen of the king's odd fancy. How important, surely! There, he looks at us! I believe that that miserable upstart takes particular pleasure in giving me pain. I dare say he informs all his comrades that he is our relative. O, mother! is not this afflicting?"

"We must bear under it, dear, with patience," replied the mother; "and beside, it matters not so much now, as it did when he was but a poor stripling. Then, indeed, it was galling to our refined feelings to see him around, and more galling yet to hear the impudent fellow calling me 'aunt.'"

"I acknowledge," replied the daughter, "that matters are not quite so mortifying now, as they were then; but yet, I fear that the knowledge of his early poverty is universal. But, dear mother, dost thou know where among the students we may have a glance at those Jewish upstarts?"

"I certainly know not, my dear," replied the mother, "for that information we must apply to thy father."

"However it may be in regard to other points," replied the dignified parent; "I am under the necessity of informing you, that on *this* point I am not better informed than yourselves; but if, in this case, I was called to be a judge, and give my opinion, I should pronounce them to be those four on the left, yonder."

"I dare say they are," quickly replied the daughter, "for, surely, although far from being ill-looking, they are much inferior to many others. How inferior they appear to those four yonder, at the head, on the right. I would be delighted to know who those beauties are."

"Well, dear, we must be patient," replied the mother; "for soon our curiosity will be fully satisfied; and may the gods smile upon our Scribbo and Shagoth, and give them complete triumph; for——"

The sound of music from without, gave them to understand that the king was approaching. Presently the illustrious monarch of Chaldea made his grand entry, accompanied by a brilliant escort, and amid the flourishing of trumpets and the loud acclamations of his subjects, he took his seat, and beckoned to the enthusiastic throng to be seated. Per-

fect stillness being restored, Ashpenaz arose with calm dignity, and bowing low to the sovereign, proceeded:

"According to appointment, O king, behold these young men are conducted hither for public examination in the presence of their illustrious sovereign, and in the presence of these, his nobles.

"The period which thou, in thy wisdom, didst allot for their improvement having expired, they now stand ready, to the utmost of their capacity, to give correct answers to all questions which the King of Babylon, in his wisdom, may see fit to direct to them concerning the language, the arts and sciences of the Chaldeans. Among these young men, O king, thou seest those from other countries, who, according to thy command, were directed to my care, and who at that time were but partially versed in the language of the Chaldeans. I am happy to know that these have exhibited a very commendable degree of perseverance in their various studies, and will, I trust, give satisfactory proof that diligence must always be crowned with success. The greater part of these young men, O king, are the noble sons of Chaldea, and I trust that from this place they shall go forth and render efficient service to their king and country. As far as he was able, thine unworthy servant has given such instructions as he thought the most

in unity with the mind of the king; and now I present them to thee, to be examined after thy pleasure and direction."

To which the monarch replied—

"Citizens of Babylon! the king taketh much pleasure to greet you on this occasion. To witness your smiles is truly refreshing to my mind amid all the pressing duties of my extensive empire. I trust I shall always merit your smiles and well wishes. Long may the Chaldean empire continue to shine a superior orb in the firmament of nations.

"The stability of government must greatly depend on the wisdom and intelligence of the people; and ever since I have had the honor of presiding over the destinies of this vast empire, I have not for a day lost sight of this great and important truth. Whether since the beginning of my reign the cause of education has been advanced, I leave to the judgment of my worthy subjects. Three years ago, I thought it advisable to establish a school at the expense of the government, where a number of young men might be placed under the care of superior instructors, and be so prepared to serve with distinguished ability in the different spheres in which they might be called to move. Those youths are now before you; and if their mental culture will well compare with their fair countenances and manly forms, my most sanguine expectations are more than realized. I am

happy to know, from vigilant observation, that the teachers, without any exceptions, have nobly proved themselves fully worthy of the unreserved confidence of their king; and let them now be assured, that such unwearied faithfulness will not go unrewarded. The king has been well pleased also, from time to time, to hear of the great proficiency and rapid advancement of many of the scholars.

"It cannot be expected, on an occasion like the present, that each scholar will exhibit precisely the same amount of ability and cultivation. While all may give satisfaction, some, I trust, will even excel. Those who shall at this time give the clearest proof of ripe scholarship, shall, according to agreement, be permitted to remain at the palace, and minister in the presence of the king, with the prospect of promotion as the fruit of faithfulness. I trust there are no unpleasant feelings to arise from the final result of this day's exercises. True, there may be some innocent disappointment among both parents and scholars; but let not the king be grieved by witnessing any signs of displeasure on the countenance of young or old; for, hitherto, no partiality hath for once been permitted to dictate in any of our councils. Those whom the king promotes must therefore be promoted on the strength of their own worth and merit.

"My worthy and noble friend, Ashpenaz, will now

commence the examination; after which, if I think it expedient, I may ask a few questions myself. Ashpenaz, proceed;" and the king sat down amid loud applause.

Ashpenaz then, according to direction, commenced the examination. The king, in the meanwhile, earnestly facing the students, and paying particular attention to every answer, and the source from whence it proceeded. It soon became evident that the king's remarks, in regard to the various abilities of the scholars, were perfectly correct. Some there were deficient; others there were who displayed a commendable degree of knowledge; and there were a few who even excelled. After an examination of one hour, the king gave to Ashpenaz a signal, by which he understood that he might dispense with any further questioning. He respectfully bowed to his sovereign, and, in the most dignified and easy manner, took his seat.

The king then, as he had previously intimated, became the examiner. Being somewhat astonished, as well as delighted, by the perfect ease with which the youths of Judah answered every question, he purposed, within himself, to make a further trial of their skill, by propounding questions to the school, which were far more difficult to answer than those asked by Ashpenaz. The reader is already aware

that the king was one of the ripest scholars within the empire, and, therefore, was fully prepared for the undertaking. The first question was directed to Shagoth. Shagoth suddenly colored, and, in endeavoring to answer, stammered out something which the king could not appreciate. The same question was directed to Apgomer. Apgomer, with steady voice and correct emphasis, answered; and it was pronounced to be correct. The next question was directed to Scribbo. Scribbo, greatly alarmed at the result of the other question, became confused, and gave no answer. The same question was directed to Daniel, and was promptly answered, with marked ease and great clearness. The next question was directed to a young student, who sat in the vicinity of Shagoth, but was not answered to the satisfaction of the king. The same was directed to Hananiah, and the answer was such as to astonish the examiner. Another perplexing question was directed to a young student, a resident of the city; but it was of too profound a nature for the young man to answer. The king having asked the same question of several of the students without receiving an answer, at last directed the same to Azariah. The young Hebrew hesitated—it was but for a moment—then, in a clear, silvery tone, he gave the answer, without any betrayal of the least degree of

confusion. It was beyond the expectation of the king. He gazed on the youth for a moment in silence, and then pronounced the answer to be a perfect one. Another question of the same nature, requiring, perhaps, some additional knowledge, was asked, the king remarking, at the same time, that his good opinion of their abilities did not depend upon their answering those questions, for they were of such a nature as would puzzle more experienced heads; but such was the readiness with which some of the scholars had answered all the questions hitherto asked, that he was anxious to know if it was in his power to ask a question which they could not answer; and in order to give all an equal opportunity, he would direct his questions to each one. So the king commenced on the left, and deliberately pointed to each scholar; but no answer was heard until he came to young Mishael. With promptness, and in a few words, he gave a perfect answer to a question, which the King of Babylon considered beyond the capacity of any student present.

By this time it was evident to the king, that the number of those who truly excelled was four; and that these four sat together. To these, therefore, he would direct his remaining questions. And now, in earnest, commenced a regular contest for the mastery. On one hand, behold the great sovereign of

the Chaldean empire, noted for the profound depth of his learning. On the other, behold four young men, from the land of Israel, whom, three years before, he had brought as captives of war from the metropolis of Judah. All the king's powers of mind were now called forth. From the occasion he gathered a degree of enthusiasm, and he was glad of an opportunity to show himself to such a pleasing advantage, before so many of his nobles and influential subjects. With the four Hebrews he was highly delighted. Their great knowledge greatly astonished him; but still he was well convinced that soon he would be able to bring them to a dead stand. Question after question was asked, and question after question was answered, to the utter astonishment of the large audience. The contest was long, and of a thrilling nature; and not until the king was well convinced that he was dealing with his superiors, did he cry out, in a loud voice–

"It is enough!"

The monarch, after a brief interview, in silence, with a number of his officers on his right, wrote on a piece of parchment, and presented it to Ashpenaz. The courtier glanced at its contents, and immediately proceeded to carry out its directions. Turning to the students, he said:

"The king now desires, in the presence of this

large assembly, to honor those young men whom, in his wisdom, he considers as having given the clearest proof of the greatest depth of true knowledge. As their names are called they will come forward, and stand in the presence of the king."

Ashpenaz opened the parchment. Now breathless silence reigned throughout the great apartment. There were silent emotions of joy there; and there were hearts that throbbed with fear; and, as the reader is already aware, there were those whose hearts were painfully contracted with envy. The Skerbood family, or the parents and sister of Scribbo and Shagoth, were almost in agony to think that, on this grand event, no additional renown could fall to their house. But they were a little comforted in thinking that the "Jewish upstarts" were to win no laurels, for hitherto they were permitted to remain in blissful ignorance in regard to the four "beauties" at the head on the right. Every eye rested on Ashpenaz, as he stood ready to announce the names of those whom the king delighted to honor.

"Belteshazzar!"

Daniel, with calm dignity on his brow, and genuine modesty visible in every step, left his seat, walked to the place appointed, and bowed low in the presence of the king.

"Shadrach!"

Hananiah, with a slight blush, that rendered him but the more comely, left his seat, and stood by the side of his cousin, in the presence of the king.

"Meshach!"

Mishael, with a smile of pleasing wonder on his lip, with an unfaltering step, found his place by the side of his brother.

"Abednego!"

Azariah, with a degree of paleness spread over his youthful countenance, left his seat, and joined his comrades.

But there remains on that parchment one more name, although, in abilities, far below the four Hebrews, yet far surpasses the rest.

"Now for Shagoth or Scribbo!" eagerly whispered the daughter, "for what shall we do if"——

"Hark, my child!" interrupted the mother.

"Apgomer!"

Apgomer was startled with amazement. The contented youth looked for no such result. Delighted with the triumph of the Hebrews, and the punishment of his cousin's vanity, he considered himself well rewarded. But, remembering himself, he quickly left his seat, and, with a very pleasant smile upon his Chaldean countenance, he took his place by the side of Azariah.

The parchment was rolled up, and delivered over to the king.

The king, with a very pleasant smile on his countenance, arose, and thus addressed the five young men:

"Young men! Your honor cometh not from the king. It is the result of your own industry and perseverance. By the favorable interposition of the gods, ye have arrived at a perfection in knowledge never exhibited before, on any occasion in the presence of the king. Four of your number are from another country. The hills of Judah are yet fresh in your memories, and Jerusalem is far from being forgotten. I have been well pleased, from time to time, to learn of your amiable deportment and noble bearing. Justice demands me to say, that a peculiar perfection has been prominently visible in all your past performances; and now, Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, youths of Judah, ye are, through the power and word of the king, elevated to share in all the immunities and privileges of Chaldean citizens. Long, by your superior wisdom and knowledge, may ye continue to shed additional lustre on my already shining empire.

"Apgomer! Thou hast well sustained thyself throughout the examination; and, although thou

hast not reached that lofty perfection manifested in the uniform answers of these, thy young friends from Judah, yet thou hast convinced the king that thou standest far above the level of thy fellows—as such thou art rewarded.

"The king findeth no fault with any. Ye have given proof of a good degree of mental strength, and I trust that from this place ye shall go forth, to add to the stability and perpetuity of my empire.

"In conclusion, I command that Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Apgomer be decorated with their appropriate badges, and conducted, with due honor, to their appropriate apartments at the palace. The examination is closed."

The merry blasts of trumpets immediately followed this announcement. The king and his attendants first left the apartment, then followed the five youths. Next the other students. Then the concourse dispersed as their various fancies dictated. The grand result was known, and, with but very few exceptions, it gave universal satisfaction. The superior wisdom of the young Hebrews was so abundantly evident, that no room was left for cavilling; and each one was compelled to unite in the righteous verdict of the king. The amiable and modest deportment of the young Hebrews, so wore upon the affections of the spectators, that when

they were adorned with their badges of honor, they were loudly cheered, in which nearly all the students heartily joined.

Before they all disperse let the reader have the pleasure of a glimpse at a group of countenances that give unmistakable signs, not only of perfect satisfaction, but also of genuine delight.

"Charming!" cried Joram, in ecstasies. "The reward of fidelity and perseverance, Barzello!"

"Truly," answered the soldier. "But I cannot say that I have witnessed much more than I really expected. Those four youths will yet astonish the world with their matchless powers of mind. Perreeza, does it not run in the blood?"

"In some blood it *runs*," replied the merry damsel; "in others, it slowly *walks;* but, in mine, of late, it has seen fit to *lie down.*"

"Giants must have occasional repose as well as others," answered Jupheena, with a slight turn of her smiling eye toward Perreeza.

"Mother," said Mathias, with feigned gravity, "I am somewhat concerned for thy safety, while thou art so near these sharp-shooters."

"I trust, my son, I am in no great danger," said the happy mother, "as long as they both aim in another direction."

"Barzello!" said Joram, "young Apgomer has

not disappointed our fond hopes, but has come forth triumphantly."

"Triumphant, indeed!" replied his friend. "But what thinkest thou—will it add greatly to the felicity of his uncle's family?"

"Ah! who can pity the envious, or sympathize with the malicious? Let them plentifully reap the reward of their own wickedness."

"But let us depart hence!" said Barzello, at the same time casting a meaning, smiling glance on the maid of Judah. "To-morrow night, at the appointed hour, we all meet again."

And on the fair petals of the "Rose of Sharon," the hue became beautifully deeper.

CHAPTER XX.

WHERE THE READER WILL BE GREATLY PLEASED, BUT NOT SURPRISED.

The stately mansion of Barzello was brilliantly illuminated. Streams of light poured forth from every outlet. Sweet melody floated on the wings of the gentle zephyrs. Chariot after chariot arrived, and halted before the massive portals. It was evident to the passer by, that it was not an event of common occurrence that called forth such unusual movements and peculiar displays.

From the first moment of Mathias and Perreeza's introduction to each other, as mentioned in another chapter, there was a warm attachment formed, and from the subsequent revelations of that peculiar night, this attachment greatly increased. But in addition to that which so naturally sprung from their mutual relation as cousins, there was another of a different and a holier nature—the pure attachment of genuine lovers. Here love was reciprocated.

Affection met affection; and every emotional throb of one pure heart, was quickly answered by the other. Never were known purer loves than occupied the hearts of Mathias and Perreeza.

On this night the maid of Judah was to be the happy bride of the accomplished and talented Mathias; and from the smiles that greet smiles, from those happy countenances that hurry to and fro through those richly furnished apartments, it is evident that their union is hailed as a joyous event.

The marriage was not, in all its parts, so strictly after the customs of the Hebrews, as if it had been solemnized in the land of Judah. The long residence of Joram in Babylon, together with the very high regard he cherished for his friend Barzello and his family, gave the features of the occasion an admixture of Hebrew and Chaldean customs.

Never did the "Rose of Sharon" bloom fairer than to-night. Three years have added ripeness to her beauty, and dignity to her charms. She is no longer the timid maid of seventeen, but a full blooming damsel, having nearly reached her twenty-first year, with a finished perfection stamped on all her words and actions; and no one who has had the pleasure of her acquaintance, can envy such a choice spirit the heart and hand of one of the most brilliant characters in the great metropolis.

The "Lily of the Valley," to-night, has but one thing to diminish her full share of enjoyment—and that is by no means a trifling one. Her sweet Perreeza—her constant companion for the last three years, whom she loved as her own soul, and who had led her youthful heart to the pure fountain of life—is about to leave her father's house, and take her abode with another. This, at times, makes her sad. The same cause produces the same effect on Perreeza. She, also, is about to impress the parting kiss on the fair cheek of one who has proved herself worthy of her ardent love—one who gave her such a warm welcome to her large heart, when a stranger in a foreign land—one who has continued to love her with the pure affection of a sister. But these gloomy feelings are not to predominate at this time; so the "Lily" ceased to droop, and the "Rose" bloomed fresh and gay.

The announcement that Mathias, with his attendants, had arrived at the entrance, caused an exclamation of joy; and Jupheena, accompanied by a merry group of her maiden acquaintances, formed themselves into a beautiful procession, to meet them, and to escort the company, with warm congratulations, to the home of the bride, where they were received by Barzello with enthusiastic welcome, and conducted with appropriate honors to their apartments.

The ceremony was performed in a spacious room, extending throughout the length of the grand edifice. The services were conducted by a Hebrew priest, of superior piety, who was brought to Babylon with the numerous captives at the close of Jeconiah's short reign of three months.

In entering the wedding apartment, one part of the company entered at one end, while the other at the same time appeared at the other end. Thus Mathias, with a noble band of young men, and Perreeza, with a sweet group of young damsels, slowly marched, met, and formed into a grand circle at the centre of the room; the officiating priest, with a small altar, in the midst.

"Ye who are to take upon you the holy and solemn vows of matrimony, draw nigh, and stand in the presence of the man of God," said the priest, in a clear, loud voice.

Without any delay, the loving twain left the circle, and stood side by side before the sacred altar, when the priest proceeded:

"Male and female, created Jehovah them at the beginning; from this down be ye united—husband to wife and wife to husband. God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, keep, bless, and preserve you, and so fill you with all benediction and grace, that ye may walk before Him in the beauty of true perfection and holiness. Perreeza, daughter of Amonober,

of the royal line of Judah, behold thy husband! Mathias, son of the illustrious Joram, behold thy wife! Take her as thine own, and convey her to thine own habitation, and there make merry with thy numerous friends."

The ceremony was over, and Perreeza was the happy bride of her Cousin Mathias.

At the house of Joram, preparations on a magnificent scale were made for the return of the bridegroom with his bride. A large number of the very flower of the young men and maidens of Babylon were assembled, to congratulate the young pair on their happy union. The conversation very naturally turned on the result of the examination on the day previous. The following, in an under tone, passed between two young men:

"If the bride of Mathias shares largely of the spirit and wisdom of her brothers, he has certainly wedded treble the intelligence common to young maids."

"Those who have been fortunate enough to have an interview with her, unitedly declare, that she comes far nigher their ideas of absolute perfection, than anything they ever beheld. My friend Sophar informed me, the other day, that he had a short interview with her at the house of Barzello; and in speaking of the merits of the Chaldean theory of creation, he ventured to pronounce it superior to all

others. She mildly complimented him on his very happy manner of elucidating truth, and said, that, peradventure, she might yet be brought over to be a true convert to the gods of Chaldea; but that she must not be too hasty in matters of such weighty importance; and she begged the privilege of asking my friend Sophar a few questions, which favor was readily granted. She began by asking very simple ones, indicative of no future trouble to my friend; but gradually they became more serious; and Sophar began to be apprehensive in regard to a way of escape. Finally, they became of such a nature, that an affirmative answer would involve our theory in absurdity, while a negative answer would be a flat denial of old established truths; and so my friend found himself under the painful necessity of beating a hasty retreat. And he declared to me with emphasis, that before he undertakes such a thing hereafter, he must be permitted to study the 'Theory of Creation' for at least three years."

"A confession of that nature, from our friend Sophar, is surely complimentary. I should"——

This conversation was broken up by a messenger, who hurried into the apartment, crying, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh! go ye out to meet him!"

In an instant all the young men and maidens were up, each one seizing a ready torch. Their forming themselves into a procession, was but the work of a

moment; and the youthful company was on its way, their flaming torches illuminating the wide thoroughfares, and throwing a bright halo of glory around the scene.

The bridegroom and bride led the pompous train. They were seated in a superb chariot, drawn by two spirited snow-white steeds. The next was that of Barzello, containing himself and daughter. Others followed; while a merry, young company brought up the rear. Nothing could have exceeded the beauty and brilliancy of the occasion. A flashing light, from a hundred flaming torches, completely banished the gloom of night, while hundreds of delighted spectators made the welkin ring with their cheering shouts. They soon reached the wide portals of Joram's mansion. The charioteers alighted. The bridegroom and bride first entered, the guests followed in regular order. "They that were ready entered with him into the marriage, and the door was shut."

The festivities of the night were worthy of the occasion. They bore the stamp of those persons under whose directions they were conducted. There was no display of weakness. No unmeaning grandeur. Nothing superfluous or superficial. No appearance of an *effort*. Everything bore the unmistakable signs of good taste, good judgment, liberality, and nobleness of soul.

It was already past the hour of midnight. The "harp of Judah" had been brought to the house of Joram at an early hour of the evening, and, to many of the Chaldeans, it became an object of great curiosity. Among their many musical instruments they had none to which they might well compare it, and it was not to be wondered that they manifested a strong desire to listen to its proverbially-stirring tones. They had often heard that Perreeza was a skillful player, and one of the maidens ventured to ask her to favor them with one melody.

"My very kind friends, I trust, will not be displeased," said Perreeza, "if, at this time, I humbly ask to be excused. To-night I am somewhat wearied. At any future time I shall be most happy to gratify my young friends. Be it known to you that my husband is a skillful player on the harp, and is much better able, on this night, to give you a specimen of its powers to charm the ear and thrill the soul. Come, Mathias, let us all be cheered with one melody from the 'harp of Judah.'"

Mathias smilingly took the harp, and, after a short prelude, sang to a beautiful melody, the following:

"In yonder grove I linger'd long,
'Mid flowers and roses fair;
To gaze upon their beauteous hue,
And breathe the balmy air.

How passing lovely was the tint
That deck'd the blooming flower!
While on the cheek of every rose,
Young Love displayed his power.

"As from the lovely spot I strayed,
And thought of Beauty's spell,
'No rose,' said I, 'of such a worth,
Adorns *another* dell'—
By chance I came to one sweet spot,
And lo! what charming sight!
Another rose of matchless charms
Unveiled its beauties bright!'

"Above the rest *that* rose I love,
And from it cannot part;
Its blushing hues from hence must grace
The bower of my heart.
While other roses, fair as dawn,
May beautify the vale,
My rose shall in this bosom thrive,
Hail! 'Rose of Sharon.' Hail!"

This was received with rapturous applause by old and young; and they were at a loss which the most to admire, the peculiar sweetness of the harp, the profound skill of the player, or the exquisite powers of the vocalist.

* * * * * *

The wedding was over. The company had retired. Quietude was restored. The Joram

family, with one additional gem, was once more left to the peacefulness of its own mansion. They were all quietly seated. Joram arose, and slowly approached the old harp, the friend of his early days, and inspected it as with tender fondness, while the thoughts of other years fast crowded upon his memory.

"My dear father, and my dear Uncle Esrom!" said Perreeza, smiling, now that they are all gone, let us have one dear little song from *thee.*"

"Ah, precious child!" said Esrom, at the same time brushing away a fugitive tear, "I play so seldom now-a-days, I fear I would not appear to very good advantage among such fine performers."

"Nay, father! but thy playing is far superior to our best performances."

"Well, Perreeza, I will try; but I fear my song will make thee sad."

"Sadness at times, dear father, is far more profitable to the mind than hilarity."

"True! my daughter. True! We both know it by experience."

The Hebrew slowly took the harp, and in tones, peculiar for their sweetness, sung to the following words a plaintive melody:—

"Once again, sweet harp of Judah,
Charm me as in days of yore;
Years have fled, and friends have scattered,
Since I struck thy chords before!
Seest thou in this Chaldean
Any trace of 'Esrom' bright?
Harp of Judah! Welcome! Welcome!
To my throbbing heart to-night!

"Years ago, thy sweet vibrations
Cheered the house of good Salome.
Then a group of happy faces
Smiled within that cheerful dome!
Then these fingers—oh! how lightly,
Touched thy chords!—my heart was glad—
Tender parents then imploring—
'God of Israel, bless the lad!'

"Harp of Judah! there were others;
Happy sisters, fair as light!
Sweet Serintha, kind Monroah—
But where are they all to-night?
Low they lie in Salem's Valley!
Far from sorrows, toils, and fears!
Harp of Judah! in Chaldea
Witness thou these falling tears!

"Harp of Judah! since we parted
I have passed through many a storm—
Wond'rous are the ways of Heaven!
Always tending to reform!
Since that morn of separation,
Oft I thought of 'Pleasant Glen.'
Harp of Judah! Precious treasure!
May we never part again!"

The song of Joram, as the reader may well know, left a deep impression. It made them sad, but the sadness was of that nature that makes the soul better. At this time it was wisely adapted to restore that calm equilibrium, that was partially disturbed by the hilarity of the night.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOST AND FOUND.

GREAT success attended the reign of the King of Babylon. His powerful legions had proved victorious in every clime. In addition to Judea, he had subjugated Egypt, Syria, Phœnicia, and Arabia. Peace once more was proclaimed, and the great body of the army was called home. The monarch's popularity was unbounded, and his praises were loudly trumpeted on the wings of every breeze, from east to west, and from north to south. The Chaldean empire rose still higher in glory, while numerous tributaries continued to pour their streams of gold into its already rich treasuries.

The afternoon was warm and sultry. The king reclined on an easy couch within a bower, in the palace garden. His mind was occupied with reflections on the past and thoughts of the future; and thus ran the soliloquy of the mighty potentate:

"Yea, five years and past! On looking back they seem but short. But where has more been accom-

plished in so short a period? Ah, King of Babylon, thy career, hitherto, has been a brilliant one. My armies have clothed themselves with glory, which glory reflects back on their king. Surrounding nations do me homage. My coffers are filled from the wealth of Judah, Egypt, Syria, Phœnicia, and Arabia. What hinders my success? Babylon is but in the infancy of her greatness. Her glory shall yet reach the heavens! Yea, I will make her a fit place for the residence of the gods. Selfish? Yea, truly. And who ever succeeded without being selfish? Yea, the King of Babylon is selfish: but may the gods assist me to hide it from the people. To them, may it appear that all my efforts are put forth in *their* behalf. But have I no regard for the welfare of my people aside from my own glory? I have! The gods know I have. And yet, I have a strong desire that my name should be carried down to posterity surrounded by a halo of glory. Is this selfishness? Be it so. It must be done! Am I not deep in the affections of my people? In this I cannot be mistaken. Never was the Chaldean empire so firmly established. It will stand forever. Forever? Ah, that word has a long meaning. But what power *can* overthrow us? Is not Babylon the mistress of the world? Is not Chaldea the queen of nations? Will not her prosperity be perpetual? Alas, for our brief knowledge! The gods, in this, have not ele-

vated the king above the beggar. The future is enshrouded in gloom and hid from the gaze of mortals. My wise men say that they can penetrate this gloom. Can they? I have my doubts. The future—the far, far future of Chaldea I should be glad to know: but who shall sit on the throne one hundred years from to-day, and what shall be the greatness of Babylon in two hundred years, are questions which time alone must solve. Surely, this is a sultry day! Well, the future we cannot know. It may be all in wisdom. Peradven—— Ah, sleep! thou art the great conqueror of conquerors. I surrender. Thy powers are irresistible. Let me not long be thy captive. In one hour, I pray thee, strike my chains asunder, and restore me to my friends."

And the king, quietly yielding to the stern demands of Nature, was soon in the fast embrace of slumber.

* * * *

"Oh, ye gods that dwell in light, what a dream!" cried the king, hastily leaving his couch, in apparent deep agitation. "Oh, what a dream! But, alas, it has gone from me! Oh, ye gods, why have I not retained it? But can I not recall it to mind? Alas, it has fled. It has vanished! How perplexing! It was not a *common* dream. Nay, it bore particularly upon the future of my vast empire. And yet not one clear item is retained in my memory. What

shall I do? How shall the lost dream be restored? My astrologers profess to give the *interpretation* of dreams. If they can do *this*, why not as well restore the dream entire? This they *must* do; or by the gods, I will destroy every wise man in Babylon!"

And the king, in an agitated state of mind, left the garden and entered the palace.

"Arroch!" cried the king, "haste thee, and without delay, let the most noted of the wise men and astrologers of Babylon be commanded to appear in my presence. Let there be no useless tarrying. My demands are urgent. Haste thee. Away!"

Without asking any questions, the astonished and half frightened officer hastened from the presence of his king, and gave all diligence in the performance of his urgent duty. He found ready access to the prince of the magicians, delivered to him the message of the king, and retired. The astrologer soon sent the message to his numerous companions, and in a short time the concentrated wisdom of the great metropolis stood in the presence of the king.

"Ye have done well," said the king, eyeing them with a degree of severity, "to be thus punctual; a failure on this point might have involved you in serious difficulties. Ye stand before the king as the representatives of wisdom. Ye profess to be able to bring to light hidden mysteries, and make known

the transactions of the future. The correctness of your professions is about to be tested. If it stands the ordeal, well; if not, woe be unto you!"

"All this thy servants profess," replied the chief astrologer, "and all this they can perform. Let them but learn the desire of the king, and they stand ready to execute his pleasure."

"This day," replied the king, "while slumbering on my bed, I dreamed a peculiar dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the vision."

"Oh, king, live forever!" replied the magicians, well pleased with the nature of their task; "tell thy servants the dream, and we will show thee the interpretation thereof."

"Will ye, indeed!" answered the king, ironically. "But the thing has gone from me. I have no distinct remembrance of the various features of the dream. And now, as a proof that ye are able to give a correct interpretation, I demand that ye restore to my mind the dream in all its parts. Remember that ye are not able to impose on me a false vision. Now, proceed with your divination; and if in this ye fail, by the gods, ye shall be cut to pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill."

"Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation thereof," answered again the now astonished magicians.

"Ah, indeed!" said the king, disdainfully; "and

have I not already told you that the thing is gone from me; and how can I tell you the dream? If I was able to do this, ye would readily produce your lying and corrupt interpretations. Do ye not profess to derive your knowledge and power of interpretation from the gods? Then let the same gods reveal unto you the dream itself."

"This is a strange demand, indeed," answered the alarmed astrologers; "there is not a man on earth that can grant thy desire, and show thee this matter. Be assured, O king, that thou requirest impossibilities at the hands of thy servants; and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

"And do you not profess to hold intercourse with those gods?" answered the king, in a passion; "thus ye have proved yourselves to be a band of lying hypocrites. Begone from my presence, ye corrupt deceivers, and learn that your guilty career is near its close!"

So the terrified magicians were hurried from the presence of the passionate king, and by his orders were confined; and, moreover, a decree was issued, that all the wise men of Babylon should be put to death. Such was the unholy impulse of a king, who had hitherto manifested, on most occasions, a commendable degree of self-possession. The reader is already aware that the King of Babylon was of an

excitable temperament, easily wrought upon, but not very susceptible of lasting impressions; and, withal, deficient in that calm reflection which forms so important a characteristic in the character of every truly excellent monarch. Had he reflected on his former convictions, he might have been reminded that there were those in Babylon whom his own lips had but recently pronounced far superior to all the native wise men and astrologers. But he was carried away with the excitement of the occasion, and Daniel and his three companions were not thought of.

The next day, while Daniel was walking in the vicinity of the palace, he was suddenly accosted by the captain of the guard, who informed him, that it was his painful duty to apprehend him as an individual who was condemned to die by a late edict of the king.

"My worthy friend must certainly be mistaken in regard to the person," answered Daniel, with a smile; "for I am happy to know that in nothing have I transgressed the law of my sovereign."

"It would give me much pleasure on this occasion to find myself mistaken," replied Arioch; "but I fear that it will prove otherwise. Art thou not Belteshazzar, of the captivity of Judah, and art thou not numbered among the wise men?"

"And what can be the nature of my offence?"

asked the young Hebrew, nothing daunted. "If in anything I have offended, I ask not to be spared."

"And hast thou not heard the decree?"

"No new decree has reached my ears."

"Then I shall communicate to Belteshazzar all I know concerning the matter. Yesterday, about the ninth hour, my royal master, while resting on his couch, in a bower within the palace garden, fell asleep, and dreamed a wonderful dream. He awoke. But the dream was lost, and he could in nowise restore it. He was aware that it had particular reference to the future history of Chaldea; but no part of the wonderful vision could he distinctly remember. He came to the palace trembling with agitation, and gave immediate orders to summon the wise men and astrologers to his presence. The king's message was conveyed to the prince of the magicians, with the express command, that he should make it known to all his companions. In a short time a large number assembled in the presence of the king, of whom he demanded the lost dream. This they were not able to do. The king was angry, and pronounced all their pretensions base hypocrisy; and in his wrath he has issued a decree, that all the wise men of Babylon shall be put to death. Thus, Belteshazzar, I have faithfully revealed to thee all."

"Many thanks to thee, kind officer. I have no

desire to escape thy vigilance. Only permit me to see the king, and, peradventure, things may take a different course."

"Any favor I can show, without violating positive orders, will readily be granted. So I will make thy pleasure known to the king."

Arioch hastened into the presence of the sovereign, and informed him that one of the wise men prayed to be admitted into his presence.

"I desire not to see any of the vile race!" answered the king, with a frown. "I was satisfied yesterday that they are a band of lying impostors."

"May the king pardon his unworthy servant," replied Arioch; but the young man that seeks thy face to-day, was not among the number yesterday."

"And by what name is he known?" frowningly inquired the king.

"His name, O king, is Belteshazzar, of the captivity of Judah."

"*Belteshazzar! Belteshazzar!*" exclaimed the king, suddenly rising to his feet. "May the gods forgive me! *Belteshazzar*, whose wonderful display of wisdom astonished the city on the day of examination? Why did I not think of him sooner? Yea, and his three companions! and all at the palace! close at hand! and far superior in wisdom to all others!—*Belteshazzar!* Yea, Arioch! By all means let the young Hebrew be admitted."

The captain of the guard gladly hastened from the presence of the king, to inform Daniel of his success.

"Belteshazzar! the king grants thy petition, and thou art requested to appear before him."

Daniel, with his usual calmness and dignity, walked into the presence of the king, while Arioch was beckoned to retire.

"Belteshazzar," said the king, in a familiar tone of voice, "thou art thus admitted into my presence, and thou art at perfect liberty to speak freely on whatever subject that mostly occupies thy mind. I have heretofore been well pleased with thy superior knowledge and wisdom, as well as that of thy comrades. The army has of late occupied the most of my attention; and among the various affairs of importance, it is nothing astonishing if some of my best subjects are partially overlooked—proceed with thy request."

"A little over four years ago, O king, according to thy direction, thy servant, with his three companions, were brought from the land of Judah to the great city of Babylon. Hitherto, we have been the subjects of thy kind regards. At thy expense we have been taught in all the learning and wisdom of the Chaldeans; and, in the presence of hundreds of thy worthy nobles, thou sawest fit to pronounce us superior in the various branches of learning, and,

amid enthusiastic cheers, were escorted to the palace of the king. We have endeavored to prove ourselves worthy of thy favors and regards. We have spared no pains to render ourselves agreeable in the eyes of our superiors; and never have we heard a word of complaint. We have made no pretensions to superior wisdom. We are numbered among the wise by the direction of the king. In all things have we aimed to be thy faithful, loyal subjects. Judge then, O king, the astonishment of thy servant when, not half an hour ago, he was apprehended by the captain of the guard as one already appointed to death, according to the direction of the king. I wonder not that thine anger is kindled against the false pretensions of the magicians. But why should the innocent suffer with the guilty? And why, especially, should thy Hebrew servants die without, at least, a trial of their ability through the direct agency of their God, to restore to the king his lost dream? I, therefore, pray thee, O king, to give thy servant time, and the God that I worship, will give me the knowledge of the dream and its interpretations."

"Belteshazzar," cried the king, "thy request is granted. Go! and may thy God give thee the knowledge of the vision."

Daniel left the presence of the king, and, with feelings far more agitated than he was wont to pos-

sess, he hastened to join his comrades at their apartments.

"What now, fair cousin?" said Azariah. "What am I to learn from such a countenance? Nothing of a joyful nature, I fear!"

"Alas, comrades!" answered Daniel, "unless Jehovah interfere, with a miraculous hand, we are undone. The decree has already gone forth from royal lips, that all the wise men of Babylon must perish by the sword."

He then gave his companions a full history of the thing, as he had received it from the mouth of Arioch, the captain of the guard.

"In all our trials hitherto," said Hananiah, "we have found Jehovah to be our sure refuge. In Him we trust, and He will surely open to us a way of escape."

"The God of our fathers will not suffer His chosen few, who have faithfully kept His law among the idolatrous Chaldeans, thus to perish by the hands of their enemies," said Mishael.

"Surely, in this trial, the God of Israel will maintain and vindicate his honor, and put to shame the boasting pretences of idolatrous priests," said Azariah, with his countenance beaming with holy confidence.

"Already I feel the strange assurance, that from this conflict we shall come forth triumphantly," said

Daniel. "Will not Jehovah listen to our united cries, and make known unto His servant the king's dream? Shall we, for a moment, distrust our God, the God of our fathers? Nay, comrades! The God that parted the sea and divided Jordan, will deliver us from this calamity, and convince the King of Babylon that Jehovah is God, and that His laws are far above all human enactments. Comrades! let us bow before our God, and implore Him to grant unto me a clear knowledge of the vision, whereby our lives will be spared, and Jehovah's name glorified."

"Most humbly will we all bow before our God, and pray that a clear revelation of the lost dream may be made on the mind of our beloved Daniel," said Azariah.

"Even so, amen!" answered Mishael. "Let no time be lost. Let each one of us retire by himself, and plead with Jehovah until He shall see fit to give some tokens for good."

In solemn silence, the youths of Judah parted, and retired to their respective apartments, there to prostrate themselves before the Lord in humble devotion, with full confidence that the God in whom they trusted would hear their prayer and grant their petition.

Many hours had already passed away. Stillness

prevailed throughout the thoroughfares of the great metropolis. Silence reigned throughout Babylon. The faithful night guardians solemnly paraded the streets in the performance of their important duties. The queen of cities was hushed to repose; its vast thousands had, for a while, forgotten their toil and sorrow. Old midnight was left far in the rear, and some faint signs in the eastern skies betokened the distant approach of day. But yonder, on their bended knees, see the trembling forms of Amonober's children! For many hours have they wrestled with God. Does He hear them? But where is Daniel? Let us silently enter his chamber. The son of Baramon is asleep! Mark his countenance! See the working of those features! Behold the heavy heavings of that chest! Mark the occasional compression of those lips, and the peculiar trembling of those eyelids, while signs of pleasurable and fearful emotions, alternately steal over those almost supernatural features. Disturb not his holy slumber!

Still the three brothers, "*with their faces toward Jerusalem*," are bowed before the Lord. But hark! Ah! it is the well-known voice of Daniel. It rings melodiously throughout every apartment, and it falls on the ears of the cousins. Hark!

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changeth

the times and seasons. He removeth and setteth up kings. He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that seek understanding. He revealeth deep and secret things. He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him. I thank Thee and praise Thee, O God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee; for Thou hast made known to us now the king's matter."

The young Hebrews were soon locked together in one fond embrace. There was weeping there, but they wept for joy. There were tears there, but they were tears of gratitude. The great struggle was over. They had prevailed with the Almighty. Faith was triumphant. The lost dream was found, and written in indelible characters upon the heart and memory of the foreign youth.

Early in the morning, Daniel sought an interview with Arioch, and besought the reversing of the sentence against the wise men, and assured him that he was fully prepared to appear before the king, and restore to him the lost vision.

"Let Belteshazzar be assured," said the captain of the guard, "that I shall not move a finger against the wise men, but by the positive orders of the king, and I am happy to say, that he hath ordered me to delay execution until I receive further directions.

If I can be of any service to Belteshazzar, I am at his pleasure."

"In one hour, then, I will call on thee again, and thou shalt accompany me into the presence of the king," and Daniel departed.

"The gods have favored me," said Arioch, "I am now saved from the unwelcome task. Some of our wise men, I know, are the very embodiment of dark depravity, and their death would benefit the nation; but there are others that we can ill afford to lose, and if those Hebrews are not among the most perfect, then Arioch, the captain of the guard, is no judge of human merit. If those superior fellows had been put to death, then indeed the King of Babylon would have committed a grand blunder. But why did they not receive notice from the prince of the magicians? Ah! the miserable, narrow-minded pretender is jealous of their wisdom and superior knowledge; and yet, through this very Belteshazzar the villain's life is to be spared. Well, this telling a person what he dreamed is something new, even in Babylon; and if he does it to the satisfaction of the king, it requires no great powers of discernment to know who, in one month from to-day, will be the greatest man in Babylon."

Daniel found his companions sunk into calm slumber, from which they were not then awakened. He partook of a slight repast, bowed once more in ado-

ration before his God, and returned to seek Arioch, the captain of the guard.

They were soon on their way to the palace. Arioch first entered.

"O king, live forever! Belteshazzar is without, desiring to see thee; and——"

"No more from thee at this time," interrupted the king; "retire, and send the young man hither."

The officer, well used to the manner of his sovereign, bowed himself low and retired.

"Belteshazzar," said Arioch, "thou art admitted; and may the gods give thee success."

With a firm step, and a calm look, and with full confidence in the God of Israel, the Hebrew youth once more marched into the presence of the King of Chaldea.

"Belteshazzar," cried the king, "art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?"

"The secret which the king demandeth of his servant, is far above the knowledge and comprehension of all his wise men, astrologers, magicians, and soothsayers. But the God of Heaven—that Jehovah that dwelleth in light—that cannot be approached by mortals—He revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, what shall come to pass in the latter days. Be it known, therefore, to the king, that this secret is not revealed to me through

any wisdom that I have more than any living, but it is the kind interposition of Jehovah in behalf of thy servant, and his companions in tribulation, who are doomed to die; and, moreover, to show the king that Jehovah is the only God.

"Thy dream, and the vision of thy head, are these: As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind, upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and He that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee the grand events of the future.

"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon the feet which were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broke to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the dream. Now, O king, listen to the interpretation thereof.

"Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of Heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, strength,

and glory; and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven, hath He given unto thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee; and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another; even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and this kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath

made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

For a while the king, in silent astonishment, gazed on the wonderful being before him; then he arose and fell prostrate at the feet of the captive Hebrew, and paid him adoration suitable only to a divine being.

"Let thy adoration be paid to Jehovah, O king!" cried Daniel, "for it is He that revealeth secrets, and bringeth to light the hidden mysteries."

"Of a truth, your God is a God of gods," cried the king, "and a revealer of secrets; seeing thou couldst reveal this mystery. And now, Belteshazzar, thou art exalted to be a ruler over the whole province of Babylon; and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Chaldea; and if thou desirest any particular favor, let it not be hidden from the king, for thou art worthy of all honors; and the full desire of thy heart shall be given thee."

"For himself, thy servant has nothing to ask; but be it known to thee, O king, that thou art as much indebted for the restoration of the vision to my three companions as to thy servant; for in answer to our *united* prayers the secret was made known. I pray thee, therefore, that while I am thus honored, that my companions may share in it."

"Wisely remarked. Thy three companions shall

be promoted to posts of honor and trust in the empire. Let them, under thee, preside over the province of Babylon."

Thus Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, through the miraculous interposition of that Jehovah they loved, and whose law they honored, were elevated to be the chief personages in the Chaldean empire. Surely "the wrath of man shall praise Thee, the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH A GREAT MAN IS DETERMINED TO DO SOMETHING VERY WONDERFUL.

Years passed by, and uninterupted success attended the reign of the King of Babylon. The aggrandizement of the city was without a parallel in the history of the past. It appeared to have become the leading passion of the monarch's mind. The reader may have a faint idea of the glory of the city, when he remembers that it was a regular square, forty-five miles in compass, enclosed by a wall two hundred feet high, and fifty broad, in which there were one hundred gates of brass. Its principal ornaments were the Temple of Belus, and the famous "hanging gardens."

"The Temple of Belus was most remarkable for a prodigious tower that stood in the midst of it. According to Herodotus, it was a square of a furlong on each side; that is, half a mile in the whole compass; and according to Strabo, it was also a furlong in height. It consisted of eight towers, built

one above the other; and because it decreased gradually towards the top, Strabo calls the whole a pyramid. It is not only asserted, but proved, that this tower far exceeded the greatest of the pyramids of Egypt in height. The ascent to the top was by stairs round the outside. Over the whole, on the top of the tower, was an observatory, by means of which the Babylonians became more expert in astronomy than any other nations; and made, in a short time, the great progress in it ascribed to them in history.

"The 'hanging gardens' contained a square of four plethra, that is, of four hundred feet on every side, and were carried aloft into the air in the manner of several large terraces, one above another, till the height equalled that of the walls of the city. The ascent was from terrace to terrace, by stairs ten feet wide. The whole pile was sustained by vast arches, raised upon other arches, one above the other, and strengthened by a wall twenty-two feet thick, surrounding it on every side. On the top of the arches, were first laid large flat stones, sixteen feet long and four broad; over these was a layer of reeds, mixed with a great quantity of bitumen, upon which were laid two rows of bricks, closely cemented together with plaster. The whole was covered with thick sheets of lead; upon which lay the mould of the garden. And all this flooring was contrived to keep the moisure of the mould from running through the

arches. The mould, or earth laid here, was so deep that the greatest trees might take root in it; and with such the terraces were covered, as well as with all other plants and flowers that were proper for gardens of pleasure. In the upper terrace, there was an engine, or kind of pump, by which water was drawn up out of the river, and from thence the whole garden was watered. In the spaces between the several arches, upon which the whole structure rested, were large and magnificent apartments, that were very light, and had the advantage of a beautiful prospect."—*Rollin's Ancient History.*

In addition to these magnificent works of art, the public buildings of Babylon were counted by thousands, and its splendid mansions by tens of thousands.

The four Hebrews still continued in power, and more than retained their former excellence. Daniel was highly esteemed by the king for his great wisdom and skill in the affairs of government; but those grand impressions of the superiority of Jehovah, made upon the monarch's mind at the interpretation of the dream, had well-nigh been obliterated. Pride rebelled against the thought of the future overthrow of the empire; and fain would he have persuaded himself, that uneasiness brought about by a troublesome dream was unworthy of the grand monarch of the world.

The three brothers, in their spheres, performed

their duties with that degree of perfection and exactitude that greatly pleased the king; and for this, more than on account of their genuine excellence, were they regarded by him in a favorable light. Those pleasing qualities so apparent in the earlier history of the king, were fast disappearing, to give way to pride, vanity, peevishness, and even cruelty.

The bold and impetuous declaration of the king, in regard to the sovereignty of the God of Israel, and the peculiar circumstances under which the poor Hebrews were promoted, were far from being forgotten by the Babylonians. There was a deep and abiding dissatisfaction on the minds of thousands in the realm; not so much on account of the elevation of the Hebrews, as on account of their conviction that their great sovereign was not a sincere worshipper of the gods of the empire. The king, by some occasional pleasant remarks from a number of his nobles, had noticed more than once, that there was something in their language that indicated a lack of confidence in his fidelity to the gods. Nebuchadnezzar, notwithstanding his increasing vanity, was far from being indifferent to the estimation in which he was held by his subjects. He knew that his safety was based not so much on his power, as the confidence and friendship of his people; and he was determined, if by his former professions he had unwisely magnified the God of Daniel, and thereby had

lost the confidence of his Chaldean subjects, to give them unmistakable proof that he still was a worshipper at the shrine of Belus.

"Welcome, Belrazi, into my presence," said the king, in a familiar manner; "thou hast been in my service for many years, and I have no fault to find with thy conduct. From the nature of thy position, thou art called to mingle in very numerous circles, and no man at the palace is better qualified to judge of the feelings of the subjects toward their king than thou. Come, now, be frank and plain with thy sovereign, and tell me how I stand in the estimation of my nobles."

"O king, live for ever!" replied the officer, highly delighted with this unusual mark of the king's confidence. "Thou livest in the daily warm affections of thy nobles, and in the pure regards of all thy numerous subjects. Thou art the peculiarly favored of the gods. All the nations of the earth fear thee, and pay their homage at thy feet."

"True. But art thou not aware that on one point my subjects are not as fully satisfied with their king as they might be? Behold, I have placed unusual confidence in my servant, and in return the king requireth equal sincerity."

"As thy soul liveth, O king, I shall hide nothing from thee. In mingling with thy nobles, I find that, without distinction, they are abundantly loyal. In

a very few instances, I have heard language that indicated that my lord the king was favorably inclined toward the God of the Hebrews, and less ardent in his devotion to the gods of Chaldea. But in this, has not my lord the king the perfect right to do as seemeth good in his sight?"

"The King of Babylon can do as seemeth good in his sight; and it shall seem good in my sight, not many days hence, to give abundant proof that the gods of Chaldea are the gods of the king, and that the fears of my nobles are ill-founded. I am well satisfied with thy words. Let this interview, and others of the same nature which we may have, remain a secret. Thou mayest now leave, and to-morrow at the third hour, be punctual to meet me again at this apartment."

The dignitary retired, and the king was left alone in his apartment.

"My suspicions were well founded! And, indeed, have they had no cause? Well, I was then young, and without experience. But was not the recovery of that dream a wonderful thing? Will any one dare deny that? Had the God of Belteshazzar nothing to do with it? Again my thoughts are on the God of Israel! 'Tis hard to banish it from my mind! The interpretation was natural, and perfectly consistent. But I swear by the gods, that it shall not come to pass! I will establish my empire on

such a sure foundation that it shall not be in the power of mortals to shake it! Are not the nations at my command? Are not my armies stationed on every shore? Is not Babylon the terror of kings? Ah! where is the power that can compete with Chaldea? But where am I wandering to? My nobles are jealous of my fidelity to the gods. Yea, truly, and have I not given them reason? This must go no further. If I have some lingering fears of the God of Belteshazzar, it must not be made manifest. In this I must regain the full confidence of the nation. Are they jealous of the four Hebrews? In this I fear them not. They are worth more to my empire than any chosen score of their fellow-officers. And of the wisdom of my wise men—is not more than one half of it centred in Belteshazzar? If they are envious of these young men, let it not be known to the king, or by the powers of Belus, I will let them feel my vengeance!

"But for the *king* to be suspected of being a believer in their God, is of a more serious nature. What measure shall I resort to, in order to satisfy the mind of the nation? Deny the insinuation in a proclamation? Shall the King of Babylon ever stoop to this? Never! Something more congenial with royal dignity than this must be found. An image? Yea! That will do, O king! Thou hast well thought. An image of Bell. What?

'With the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet of iron and clay?' Nay! The image Bell which I shall set up for public worship, shall be all of gold. Why otherwise? My wealth is inexhaustible. Who, after such a display, would ever suspect the King of Babylon of adhering to the God of the Hebrews? This, then, is my purpose. I shall build a great image of Bell, made of pure gold, and set it up in some favorable spot, and appoint a day for its public dedication."

The next morning, at the appointed hour, Belrazi was punctual to meet the king at his apartment. The monarch, well pleased with his scheme of the image, manifested a pleasant countenance.

"Thou art punctual, Belrazi. The king is well pleased to meet thee. Thy frank sincerity yesterday was an additional proof of thy worth. I have seen fit, since we parted, to bestow some thought on the subject on which we conversed. It is of the utmost importance to the well-being and security of the empire, that the people have unbounded confidence in their king, in all things; in matters of religion as well as in matters of state. Now, in order to expel all doubts from the minds of my nobles, in regard to my fidelity to the gods of my fathers, I have thought of a measure which, I trust, must prove successful. It is this: Let an image of our god Bell be made of

gold. Let it be of large dimensions, and far superior to any image heretofore seen in any country. Let it be set up in some favorable spot; and on the day of its dedication, let all who hold offices under the government, be commanded, by a royal decree, to appear on the spot, and, at the appointed hour, fall down and worship it; and let the penalty of disobedience be death. Let those who dare set at nought the will of the king, be taken and thrown into the burning fiery furnace. What thinkest Belrazi of this?"

"O king, live for ever! Thy goodness is unbounded. Thy design is dictated by that wisdom that cometh from the gods. The measure shall be hailed throughout the empire with shouts of rejoicing, and the day of its dedication will be a day of days in the future history of Chaldea."

"Let no time be lost, then," replied the king. "Let my head goldsmith be called, and from the lips of the king let him receive instructions in regard to the making of the image. This is my desire. Let the measure be known but to a few, until the proclamation shall go forth."

The head goldsmith was soon in the presence of the king; and after much deliberation, the exact dimensions of the great image were settled upon; and, moreover, it was agreed, that by a certain day it should be completed.

According to the direction of the king, no pub-

licity was given to the measure. Few of the king's confidential friends were apprised of it. In the mean time, no pains were spared by the chief goldsmith to have everything in readiness by the time appointed. Hundreds of the craft were called together to speed the great undertaking; and even before the time agreed upon, the idol was ready to be set up; word was sent to the king, and immediately the grand proclamation was trumpeted far and wide, throughout the length and breadth of the vast empire:

"Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, to all his Princes, Governors, Captains, Judges, Treasurers, Counsellors, Sheriffs, and all rulers of his provinces: Ye are hereby commanded to appear on the twenty-third day of the eighth month, at the third hour of the day, in the plain of Dura, within the province of Babylon, to witness the dedication of the great image which I have set up in honor of Bell, the god of the Chaldeans. Ye are, moreover, hereby commanded, at the hour appointed, to fall down and worship the golden image. Disobedience will be punished with the utmost rigor. Those who shall refuse to bow and worship, shall in that same hour be taken and thrown into a burning fiery furnace.

"Given under my hand and seal, at the great City of Babylon, on this the fourth day of the seventh month. "NEBUCHADNEZZAR."

The dedication of the great image, now became the great theme of conversation. In city and village, on hill and dell, in the palace and cottage, it was the leading subject; and throughout the empire it gave universal satisfaction. The measure for the time being had its desired effect, to establish in the minds of the Chaldeans the conviction that the king was faithful to the gods.

This proclamation was received by the three Hebrews with profound astonishment and deep regret. For many years now they had enjoyed sweet tranquillity and worshipped the God of their fathers in calm simplicity; and this was the first time, since they came to Babylon, that they were required to do violence to their conscience, by worshipping another god. Daniel, on business of great importance, was sent to Egypt, with instructions to have everything arranged to his perfect satisfaction before his return.

The three worthies soon met for the special purpose of deciding upon an uniform course of action to be followed in the approaching emergency. No fearful apprehensions could be read in those countenances. No paleness gathered upon those cheeks. No trembling seized those limbs. No fainting fear took hold of their spirits. Their eyes sparkled with holy courage, their cheeks flashed with noble emo-

tions. Their forms were unusually erect, and they were fully prepared for the worst.

The opening remarks were from Hananiah.

"Well, brothers, another cloud seems to darken our skies, and to hang threateningly over our heads; but I trust that, as servants of the Most High, we have by this time learned to gaze upon such things without terror or alarm. We are now assembled together, to take a calm, sober look at the thing as it really is, and decide on our future course. We are surely much indebted to the king. For a number of years, we have been the recipients of his bounty, and the objects of his kind regards, for which, undoubtedly, we all feel grateful. Here we are promoted to high stations of trust and honor in the nation. We are no longer Jewish subjects; we are very properly under the government of the King of Babylon. Hitherto we have yielded perfect obedience to the laws of our government, which obedience is the duty of every citizen—this we all admit: human governments are from God. But the question is this: is it our duty, as the professed worshippers of the God of Israel, to yield obedience to the insolent demand of an unholy and wicked law, that throws insult into the very face of the God of Heaven, and the Jehovah of the universe? In this case, either obedience or disobedience must be pleasing to God. Is it the will of Jehovah that we

should obey this law, or disobey it? To my mind, it is clear that, in this case, nothing short of a manly *disobedience* can be agreeable to the will of our God. Brothers, we must have decision of character. In this matter there must be no compromising with iniquity. We must spit in the face of temptation, and resolve to be right! On one hand, behold wealth, honor, dignity, the favor of the king, and the applause of idolators, and the *frowns of Jehovah.* On the other hand, behold a raging fiery furnace, dishonor, disgrace, the ridicule of the populace, the frowns of the king, with the *smiles of the God of our fathers.* Brothers, my mind is settled."

And Hananiah took his seat, with a smile of holy satisfaction playing on his lip, when Mishael suddenly arose, and said:

"The question rests here, brothers! Can any edict from any king, potentate, or human power, make null and void the laws of the eternal God? To this question, from us, there is but one short answer, and that is found in the word, '*Nay!*' Is He not higher than the highest? Are not His commands far superior to all human edicts? The law of Jehovah is supreme, and let the *higher law* be obeyed, though the heavens should fall! Azariah, what sayest thou?"

"I say I shall not bow to any god but the God of

Israel! In Him I trust. If we perish by the hand of our enemies, so let it be! Better death than a base betrayal of our sacred trust. But is not that God, that saved us once from death, able to deliver us again? Is His arm shortened, that he cannot save? Then let them heat their fiery furnace! That God, in whom we trust, will yet deliver us from this calamity, and overrule this dark providence to His glory."

A knock was heard at the door! The door was opened, and the pleasant voice of the new-comer gave them to understand that he was no other than the ever kind-hearted Apgomer.

"I trouble you, at this time, as a bearer of dispatches from my kind master, Belteshazzar, who is now in Egypt, on government business of pressing importance. Before he left, he gave me positive orders to deliver all messages to his cousins without the least delay: in obedience to which command I have now broke in upon your consultation."

"Thou art ever welcome, dear Apgomer!" answered Hananiah, "and especially to-day, as a bearer of a dispatch from one we love so well."

"And here is another, from one that, peradventure, ye love the more. Ye perceive that the children of Judah have some confidence in their Chaldean friend."

"And great is the confidence thou deservest, as

one that has proved himself a genuine friend in every trial," said Azariah.

"Let not my noble friend speak thus!" said the modest Chaldean, for I deserve it not. I must hastily return, and any further dispatches that may be sent to my care shall, without delay, be conveyed hither. Adieu!"

These dispatches proved to be letters. The last delivered was confidentially handed to Apgomer by Mathias, and was written by Perreeza.

The letter from Daniel was first considered. It was read aloud by Azariah, and the contents were as follows:

"EVER DEAR COUSINS: I have this moment read the wonderful proclamation of the king, in regard to the great image of Bell, to be dedicated on the plains of Dura. By some strange providence, he saw fit to send me hither, with imperative instructions to remain until some unpleasant affairs between the two governments are amicably adjusted; and before this can be accomplished, the great idolatrous display will have passed. Your minds, undoubtedly, have been much troubled in view of the unpleasant position in which ye are placed. So hath the mind of your beloved cousin. Already I know full well that, with holy courage, ye are ready for the grand trial. The flames of a

fiery furnace must fail to frighten a true Israelite from the worship of the God of his fathers. Past favors are not to be repaid by proving traitors to the God of Israel. We are the *temporal* subjects of the King of Babylon it is true, and in anything that interferes not with the command of Jehovah, we are happy to render him willing obedience: but with us obedience to the *higher law* is paramount to all other considerations. The words of a loving mother are yet fresh in my mind. The morning on which we left our beloved Jerusalem, she called me to her apartment, and, among a multitude of other good things, she said, 'The same integrity to the law of thy God will certainly secure thy prosperity among strangers. Thy path may occasionally be obstructed; but trust in God, my son, and all will be well. The land whither thou goest is a land of universal idolatry, where the God of thy fathers is not known, and where His worship may cause universal ridicule. Heed them not. With thy face toward Jerusalem, let thy petitions daily ascend to the God of Abraham, and He will direct thy paths. Never prove a traitor to the religion of thy fathers. My son will be obedient to the laws of his king, that do not come in contact with his religion; but if ever thou art required to render obedience to any law that clashes with the law of thy God, remember, my

son, that *disobedience* to that law must be rendered, even unto death if required. Let "obedience to the Higher Law" be thy motto; for thy mother would sooner hear of thy death as a martyr to the religion of Judah, than of thy promotion to a throne by apostasy.'

"These burning words of your Aunt Josepha, to her son Daniel, are the words of Daniel to his cousins. Prove true to your religion! and if in this ye die, it shall be but the will of your God. But, cousins, ye shall not die! That same Jehovah who appeared in our behalf years ago, in the revelation of the king's dream, will again stretch out His arm to save. If Jehovah interferes in your behalf, there is not fire enough in all Chaldea to injure a hair of your head. I long to be with you! Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be immediately called back to Babylon. Then side by side would we stand erect, and scorn to bow before a golden image. But it appears to be the will of Jehovah that I should be absent. I have confidence that I shall soon embrace you in Babylon; but if in this I am mistaken, we soon shall meet in the better Jerusalem above.

"DANIEL."

It was with some difficulty that Azariah commanded sufficient control over his feelings, to enable

him to read the letter aloud; but with something of a trembling accent it was done, when they all for a few minutes indulged in the luxury of affectionate tears.

"Thanks be to Jehovah!" cried Mishael, "for such sweet consolation in the midst of sore affliction."

"But what says our beloved Perreeza?" said Hananiah.

No one felt ,willing to read aloud their sister's letter, so it was read by each in silence. It ran, thus:

"Dear Brothers: With emotions indescribable, Perreeza endeavors to write these few lines, that may impart some consolation to her dear brothers while strong waves of affliction pass over their souls. Being much confined of late to my dwelling, it was but yesterday that I derived any knowledge of that awful proclamation of the king in regard to his great image. From the heavy countenances of my husband and Uncle Esrom, I readily learned that something of a painful nature had transpired. In kindness to your sister, for many days they kept it to themselves; and it was with much importunity and tears that I at last prevailed upon them to divulge the cause of their sorrow. O, my brothers! the companions and guardians of my juvenile hours,

into whose care and warm affections I was committed by the parting words of a dying mother! Oh, my brothers! how ardently does your sister love you! how deep for you is the affection of Perreeza's heart! What can I say that will cause one sweet ingredient to drop into your bitter cup? Nothing better do I know, than the favorite sentence of our beloved Jeremiah. If the good prophet were here would he not say, 'Jehovah is the strength of all His saints; trust in Him and be at peace!' Oh, how sweetly flowed the gentle words of the man of God! Brothers! dear as ye seem to my throbbing heart, terrible as the fiery furnace may rage, Perreeza has no desire that your safety should be purchased at a dishonorable price. Nay, brothers! if for a moment I should indulge in such an unholy desire, that moment I should forfeit all right to call you brothers. I shall not even *advise* you to stand firm in the fiery trial. Ah! too well do I know that your noble souls already scorn the command of an apostate king, who once acknowledged the supremacy of the God of Israel. Brothers! Perreeza tremblingly believes that ye shall not die. I trust I have not read the history of our nation for naught, neither have I forgotten the miraculous revelation of a lost dream, to speed the wrath of an enraged monarch, and save the lives of the innocent. Brothers! this God is our God for ever and ever. Oh, my faith takes hold of His

mercy, and I hear some gentle whisperings, saying: 'Thy brothers shall not die?' Is it not the voice of some sweet angel of mercy commissioned to administer peace to a sorrowful daughter of earth? Remember, brothers, that in your behalf many prayers shall ascend to Jehovah by night and by day. Among these shall be found the trembling petitions of Perreeza; and will they not prove acceptable to Him who said: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will answer thee?' My precious Jupheena with her little daughter Sarah (a good Hebrew name) came to see me this morning, and she is very confident that the God in whom we trust will bring you through this trial triumphantly. Dear brothers, accept this hasty dispatch as an offering of pure affection. Farewell, until our next joyful meeting.

"PERREEZA."

With full hearts, the brothers bowed before the Lord and rolled their burdens upon the Almighty. The entire consecration was now made, and they were ready for the trial. The struggle was over and their minds became as calm and tranquil as a summer evening.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE "HIGHER LAW" TRIUMPHANT.

In an extravagantly furnished apartment of a fine looking mansion in the heart of the city, sits a family group, consisting of a father, mother, two sons, and one daughter. They are far from exhibiting in their countenances that contentment of mind which is a "continual feast," and yet something has transpired that gives them, for the time being, an unusual degree of pleasurable emotions.

The father leaves his seat, and with folded arms he begins to pace slowly backward and forward the length of the apartment, with an air of pompous dignity, while ever and anon a smile of extreme selfishness plays on his lips. He has received intelligence which he considers by no means displeasing.

The mother, to whom nature has been rather niggardly in the endowment of outward charms, is loaded with a superabundance of golden ornaments, in the vain attempt to supply the lack of the of the natural with the artificial. In her eye you

look in vain for intelligence, or in her countenance for benevolence: but she smiles! yea, indeed, with something the mother is evidently pleased.

The two sons, in making a declaration of their brotherhood to a stranger, would stand in no danger of being suspected on that point as deceivers. The resemblance truly is quite striking. If in one countenance you can trace signs of disappointed ambition, so you can in the other. If in the eye of one you can read envy and malice, their counterparts are certainly visible in the eye of the other; and if in the compressed lips of that brother you learn that he is looking for revenge, trouble not yourself to scrutinize the other, for be assured he presents the same unhappy and guilty signs. But at this time, the brothers are greatly delighted with some measure that has already or is to transpire.

The daughter was once very young, and still she is very beautiful—in her own estimation. To this she clings as a very essential part of her creed, that she constitutes a very important share of the beauty of Babylonia, but in getting it implanted into the creed of others, she proves very unsuccessful—her converts being wholly confined to her father's household. She also, with the rest, on this night manifests an unusual degree of hilarity.

"Ah! they are ensnared at last," said Scribbo,

with an air of triumph. "They must either deny their religion or face the furnace. This is right, and happy am I that the king has at last seen fit to enact a law that will bear with stringency on these pretending foreigners who fill the most important stations in the government."

"But, brother," said the sister, eagerly, "which thinkest thou they will chose—the worship of our gods or the fiery furnace?"

"I am in hopes they are fanatical enough to choose the latter," answered the brother; "for in case they should chose the former, they would be as much in our way as ever. But then it would be some consolation to know that they had been compelled to worship and bow before the gods of the Chaldeans."

"There is one thing to be deeply regretted," said Shagoth. "I am informed that Belteshazzar, the great Rab Mag, is now in Egypt, and is not expected to return for some weeks. He also ought to bear them company and share the same fate. But, if we can only put these three out of our way we shall have abundant reason to adore the gods."

"But, my sons," said the mother, "will not these Hebrews elude notice among so many? The gods know how I fear lest after all they may escape."

"Fear not that, mother," answered Scribbo.

"Shagoth and myself will so arrange matters as to be near them; and if they bow not with us we will on the spot report them to the king."

"This is a matter of ponderous importance, and of immense consequences," said the promenading pomposity. "From this, Chaldea shall hereafter reap abundant harvests. These proud and insolent foreigners who insinuate themselves into offices which native Chaldeans ought to fill, will now learn a lesson of modesty to which they have hitherto been strangers. Far better for our beloved Chaldea if the superstitious brood had been left in their own country. May the gods grant that every Hebrew office-holder may so cling to his imaginary god, as to walk straight from office into sure destruction. My motto is 'Chaldeans for Chaldea!' Personally, I have no hostility toward these young men. Nay! But, O my country! my country! it is for thee my heart bleeds! Sons! ye shall do well to be on your guard, and see to it that they escape not your vigilance. If they die, their offices will be vacant, and must soon be supplied by some persons of ability. O my country! It is for thee, O Chaldea! my heart bleeds!"

"But," said the anxious mother, "are not these important offices at the disposal of the Rab Mag? If he still remains, can we expect any favors from

him? Alas! my husband may well cry, 'O my country!'"

"Perhaps," said the daughter, "if he hears of the death of his companions, he will never return, but flee over the mountains to his own country."

"A trivial mistake, my daughter," said the patriot; "his country would lie in an opposite direction."

"But could he not change his course?" asked the half offended daughter.

"Yea, verily, my child, if he should find that he was in the wrong path; peradventure, this would constitute his first business."

"I can hardly hope for such a happy result, sister," said Shagoth. "The conniving demagogue will cling to his office until compelled by a stringent law to abandon it."

"Before many days, the Rab Mag will return," said the erect promenader. "And will not the king ere long set apart another day for the public worship of the gods? And if this foreign pretender escapes now, justice will overtake him then. The vengeance of our deities will not always slumber, and these worshippers of other gods shall soon know that the best offices in our government, and the best interests of our beloved country, are not to be entrusted to a horde of superstitious foreigners. O my coun-

try! Sons! let me caution you again to be on the watch for these three rulers. They hold important offices, and such a favorable opportunity is not to be lightly regarded. O my country, my country!"

* * * * * *

The great day appointed for the dedication of the great image at last arrived. Its ushering in was hailed by the populace with universal enthusiasm, marked by shouts of rejoicing. The day was fair and beautiful. No threatening cloud was visible in the heavens above. The great merciful First Cause permitted his sun to pour forth his cheering beams upon thronged thousands of idolators. The great metropolis, at a very early stage, presented one grand scene of activity and preparation for the appointed hour. The soldiery were out by thousands; their glittering panoply dazzling in the clear sunbeams. Officers of all grades hurried to and fro with deep excitement visible on their countenances. Hitherto, there had been no movement from the city towards the plains of Dura. Those swarming thousands were evidently expecting some peculiar signal, at which they were ready to march. The word of command was at last given, and the great multitude moved forward with wonderful regularity.

Onward the mighty concourse moved through the principal thoroughfares, amid the ringing of

bells, and blasts of trumpets, and the proud waving of banners, until they arrived in a spacious square in front of the royal palace. Here they halted. In front of the monarch's mansion were seen stationed several platoons of soldiers. All eyes were directed towards the chief entrance into and from the king's enclosures; from whence, momentarily, they expected to witness the grand entry of the great potentate.

At last, the massive portals were thrown open, and the king, in a magnificent chariot, drawn by fiery steeds and surrounded by an imposing guard, made his appearance. He gently waved his hand in the direction of the multitude, when, with one voice, the great mass exclaimed—

"O king, live for ever!"

The procession was soon on its way for the plains of Dura; the king leading the pompous train, while eager thousands brought up the rear. On their way, they were joined by thousands more, who at different places waited their arrival, and at every stage the high praises of the King of Babylon echoed from ten thousand voices. Soon they came in sight of the celebrated spot. The vast plain swarmed with moving multitudes. Already the golden image struck their excited vision, glittering in the bright sunbeams, far above the moving throng. Nearer and nearer the royal procession approached the con-

secrated grounds, while enthusiastic thousands greeted it on every hand. At last, they reached their destination. The king was escorted and placed on a magnificent elevated throne of gold, in close proximity to the golden image. With some degree of excitement, he sat down—arose again, and bowed to the audience; and another shout, that rent the skies, arose from full five hundred thousand voices.

The great image far surpassed any thing of its kind within the realm. Its dimensions were large and well proportioned; its height being twenty cubits, and its breadth six cubits, elevated on a richly gilded pedestal, forty cubits in height; thus being perfectly visible to all the worshippers. Around its base stood the officiating priests of Belus, with solemn visages; their long flowing robes adorned with numerous articles of rich regalia.

Scribbo and Shagoth, faithful to their revengeful promise, were on the keen alert for our three Hebrews. Since an early hour they had their malicious eyes upon them. For hours they followed them in all their movements; but in the great pressure on reaching the plain they were divided, and, unluckily for them, they lost sight of the objects of their extreme hatred. From place to place they hurried in their unholy search, but for a long period it proved unavailing. In their wanderings they came across Apgomer.

"We are in search of thy three Hebrew friends," said Shagoth. "Canst thou inform us where we may find them?"

"I can," promptly replied Apgomer. "I know the exact spot on which they stand."

"This is truly gratifying," replied Scribbo. "Now lead us to the spot without delay."

"To my Hebrew friends your presence would be any thing but agreeable; and as I am under far more obligations to them than to some others, I am very happy to disregard your request."

"Thou art in command of the same daring insolence as characterized thy school days," said Scribbo, in an angry tone.

"To be accused of insolence by the envious sons of Skerbood, is fully equivalent to being called noble and gentle by a worthy citizen," answered Apgomer, with a smile of noble contempt playing on his lip. "So permit me to thank you for the high compliment."

"Speakest thou so to us, thou insulting pretender?" cried Shagoth, in a rage. "Thou hadst better depart ere we punish thy insolence with the edge of the sword."

"Terrible words, surely, from mighty swordsmen!" said Apgomer, smiling. "Is it any wonder I tremble beneath your gaze? Even from the days of your childhood your courage and valor have been

proverbial. My cousin Scribbo, at the early age of ten years, would, without fear, push headlong into the water little girls three years younger than himself; while the brave Shagoth, at the early age of twelve, could find no more pleasing recreation than to scourge his poor relatives of eight years old and under. Then ye were heroes in embryo; and now, having grown up, is it any wonder that the whole realm quakes beneath your tread? Hail! all hail, ye mighty sons of Skerbood! This is the day in which ye look for the full realization of your guilty hope, in the death of three of the choicest noblemen that ever adorned the Chaldean realm. Be not too sure of your prey. Strange things have appeared in those young men's histories, and more strange manifestations may yet appear."

"Too long already have we listened to thy insolent and silly harangue," said Scribbo. "Right glad are we that these foreign pets, who have so long been dandled on the lap of royalty, are at last brought to the test. We only hope that their fanaticism may lead them to disobedience. In that event, we would ask for no greater pleasure than to be permitted to throw them into yon blazing furnace."

"Ye are surely well adapted for such an undertaking. By all means, volunteer your services; and remember that, in the midst of your burning patriotism, that these young foreigners hold responsible

offices, that must be filled by some competent personages."

"Away, Scribbo, from the sound of this barking dog!" said Shagoth. And the two office seekers hurried away in search of the doomed Hebrews.

This time they proved more successful. They had gone but a little distance when they saw the three brothers together, a few rods on the left from the throne. The two Chaldeans, unobserved, stationed themselves close behind them, and there waited for the grand result.

Soon, a signal was given for the throng to come to silence and order. This was not easily accomplished. At length, however, order was fully gained, and breathless silence reigned over half a million of idolaters. This silence was broken by the loud accents of heralds, who passed through all parts of the vast assembly, crying, at the top of their voices—

"To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

The heralds returned to their places, and their voices were no longer heard.

Did our three Hebrews hear that herald's cry? Did the stern demand fall upon their ears? Yea, kind reader, they heard it all, and not for one moment did their courage fail. The curling smoke of the fiery furnace, the presence of the king on his golden throne, the majestic appearance of the great image, with the pomp and glory of the occasion, could not cause them to forget the God of their fathers, their allegiance to the King of kings, and their regard to the "higher law."

The grand signal was given! The cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musical instruments poured forth their loud strains, and the great mass fell prostrate before the glittering idol. What a scene was that! Shall the great Jehovah of the universe suffer this occasion to pass by without making a display of his infinite power? Shall not the idolatrous throng learn ere they part that there is a God in Israel? Shall not the haughty bearing of a wicked king be humbled? Shall not virtue be publicly crowned and rewarded? And shall not the triumph of the "higher law" be complete?

Yonder, behold those champions of moral integrity! Only three among five hundred thousand! While all besides have bowed the knee, there they

stand! Their figures are beautiful! Their forms erect, their arms folded, while an involuntary smile of contempt plays lightly on their lip.

"By the gods, we have them!" whispered Shagoth, in ecstasies. "Behold, Scribbo, how erect their posture!"

"Hold thy peace!" whispered Scribbo, in return; "or they will hear us. When we rise, then we will confront them to good advantage. Thanks to the gods, they have well favored us."

The signal for the vast throng to arise from their worshipping attitude was given. No sooner was it heard, than Scribbo and Shagoth walked with an air of conscious triumph and stood before the three Hebrews.

"And who are these presumptuous and rash mortals," said Shagoth, "who thus dare to set the laws of the king at defiance? Tremble, ye daring wretches! for who are ye to withstand the vengeance of our sovereign?"

"To the king, then, we are accountable; and not to thee, thou crawling reptile," answered Hananiah. "So haste thee away; and if thou hast any authority, let it be displayed within its own sphere."

"Ah!" cried Shagoth, "ye are doomed to die! See ye not the heated smoke of the fiery furnace? Your guilty and rash conduct shall be made known to the king without delay. Your guilty career is

well nigh run; and Chaldea shall soon be delivered from the curse of foreign officeholders."

"But not from the curse of a grovelling, envious, unprincipled horde of office *seekers*," said Azariah, casting a withering glance on the two brothers.

"Away, brother!" cried Scribbo. "For why should we hear the abusive harangue of these overfed demagogues?"

And away the patriots hurried with their complaint to the king.

The monarch was surrounded by a large number of his nobles, who were loud in their congratulations at the complete success that had crowned the day.

An officer in uniform came forward, and bowed low in the presence of the king.

"What is thy pleasure, Arioch!" asked Nebuchadnezzar.

"Two men have approached the guard, O king, greatly desiring to be admitted into thy presence on business (as they say) of vast importance."

"Let them be admitted!" was the ready answer.

With anything but ease of manner, Scribbo and Shagoth walked into the royal presence.

"And what have ye to communicate?" inquired his majesty, eyeing them as if not quite satisfied with their appearance.

"O king, live for ever!" replied the Chaldeans. "Thou, O king, hast made a decree that every man

that heareth the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain *Jews* whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Then was the king full of wrath and fury. "What!" said he, "is my royal decree to be thus set at defiance? Is this the return they make to the king for their high promotion in the government? By all the gods, I'll bend their stubborn wills, or they will suffer my vengeance to the uttermost! Let them be summoned into my presence without further delay!" And officers were soon on their march to bring the offenders before the highest tribunal.

In a richly furnished apartment of a spacious building, in the vicinity of Pharaoh's palace, in the ancient city of Zoan, in Egypt, we see a young man of noble bearing and surpassing fairness. With deep thought written on his visage, with ever and anon a deep heaving sigh, he continues to pace the length of the splendid chamber. On a highly polished table near the centre of the room, lies a large number of written parchments; mostly state papers, bearing on import-

ant relations existing between Egypt and Chaldea. Is it the perplexing nature of these state matters that throws a shade of gloom over those noble features? Nay; for these difficulties are amicably and satisfactorily adjusted, and the Chaldean Prime Minister will be ready on the morrow to return to Babylon. Something of more weight than talents of gold, bears at this time on the mind of the noble Hebrew. His agitation becomes greater! His sighs become more audible. His whole frame quivers! He falls upon his knees, and with his windows open towards Jerusalem, he pours the burden of his complaint before the God of his fathers.

Closeted together in the house of Mathias, we see the fair forms of Perreeza and Jupheena. Hark! They converse! Yea, but it is with Jehovah! Long have they struggled, and they struggle still. What is the burden of their desire? Think they not of scenes transpiring on yonder plains? May Heaven answer their urgent petitions!

Soon the officers returned with the three brothers in respectful custody. The king, from his elevation, saw them approaching. An innocent smile rested on each countenance; and in spite of his haughty arrogance, the king's heart was touched, and his better feelings for a while triumphed. They stood in his presence, and respectfully, as usual, made their obeisance.

"Am I rightly informed, O Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego," said the king, "when I hear that ye do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image that I have set up? It may be true; yet for your sakes, I will give you one more trial: but beware that ye further provoke not my displeasure! The king's command is not to be trifled with! Vengeance to the uttermost will surely fall on the disobedient! Heretofore, your noble deportment in the government has merited my warmest approbation. In no instance have I had any reason to regret your appointments to stations of trust. Well have ye discharged the duties of your responsible offices. Why, then, should ye now, by one act of disobedience, bring speedy destruction on your own heads? I have no pleasure in your ruin. The king is not blind to your superior talents and excellent traits of character; therefore he condescends to give you another trial—a favor which he would grant to but very few within his realm. Now, if ye be ready at the sound of the music to fall down and worship my golden image—well. If not, then, at this same hour, ye shall be thrown, without mercy, to yonder fiery furnace, whose smoke now ascends in your sight—and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?"

Without the least betrayal of fear, Hananiah, in a firm tone of voice, addressed the monarch:

"O king, it requireth no careful deliberation in this matter. In so plain a case the answer is ready at hand. Thy servants, as thou well knowest, are natives of Judah, and we worship no god but the God of our fathers. As foreigners, we have at all times been careful to use no disrespectful language in regard to the gods of Chaldea, or those who pay them homage; and hitherto, unmolested, have we paid our simple adoration to the Lord God of Israel. The law of our God, with us, is regarded as infinitely superior to all human edicts. In all things pertaining to the government, we have faithfully endeavored to do thy will, and obey the directions of our sovereign. But not until this day have we been required to deny our religion, and insult our God. To thee, O king, we are much indebted. For many years have we been the objects of thy kind regards. But be it known to Nebuchadnezzar, that the continuance of his favor is not to be purchased by a base betrayal of our principles, or a denial of our God. We cannot serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. We bow the knee to God most high alone! To us thy fiery furnance has no terrors! Its high ascending flames in vain strive to alarm us! Jehovah, in whom we trust, is able to deliver us. That God who divided the Red Sea in two parts, and made Israel to pass through the midst of it, and who parted the waves of the

swelling Jordan, is able to preserve thy servants alive in the midst of the devouring flames! Yea, *He* will deliver us out of thy hand, O king! But, if in this we are mistaken, be it known unto thee, that *we can never obey any law of man that requireth a violation of the law of God.* Therefore, we utterly refuse to serve thy gods, or worship this golden image which thou hast set up."

"Seize the ungrateful wretches!" cried the king, in a rage, while passionate paleness spread over his countenance. "Seize the ungrateful wretches, who set my authority at nought, and who thus insult their king! By the gods, now shall they feel the weight of my hot displeasure, and reap the reward of their daring insolence! Let the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Let the worthless dogs be thrown in, and let their God, if he is able, prove himself superior to the gods of Chaldea! Bind them now, in my presence! Let the king see that every thing is sure!"

The three brothers were violently seized on the spot by several strong men, and bound hand and foot with strong cords. When this was done, they were conveyed in the direction of the fiery furnace. The news had soon spread throughout the vast assemblage, and pressing thousands urged their way towards the place of execution. The fire raged with unusual fury. Fagot after fagot was thrown in. The angry

flames leaped high above the top of the black walls that surrounded them. The executioners were strong men of the royal guard. To these were added a number of others, who, to show the strength of their patriotism, volunteered their services. Foremost among these were Scribbo and Shagoth. With what triumphant malignity they gazed on the bound Hebrews! How complete they considered their own victory! How their bowels yearned in pity for their country as they fondly thought of those important offices now made vacant by the death of these hateful foreigners! High in exultation beat the hearts of those sons of Skerbood.

The word of command was given, and the innocent victims were taken and dragged up the massive steps that led to the upper edge of the burning pit. In this our two volunteers showed more than an ordinary degree of *patriotism.* The Hebrews were taken and laid side by side, ready for their awful doom. The stout hearts of the soldiers were touched with pity as they gazed on the noble forms of their victims, of whom they had never heard aught but good; and they felt loath to perform the awful deed. But not so the patriotic sons of Skerbood.

"Why not throw the guilty rebels in?" cried Shagoth, with an air of importance.

"As ye appear to take far more pleasure in this

transaction than we do, we are very willing to bestow the honor of throwing them in on yourselves. So proceed with your delightful performance," said the soldier, at the same time giving way, while his companions followed him some two or three steps downward.

"With all pleasure!" answered Scribbo, whilst, with fiendish eagerness, they both turned to perform the foul deed. With a firm grasp they first laid hold on Azariah, and he was thrown into the midst of the flames. The same was done to Mishael; and, finally, as Hananiah dropped from their foul touch to the burning depth below, the ascending flames became doubly enraged; at the same moment, the wind shifted, and became very strong; and, as sudden as a flash of lightning, the terrific flames poured their awful vengeance on the guilty heads of Scribbo and Shagoth. For a moment they whirled in the midst of God's avenging scourges, crying loudly for help; but no help could be administered! In another moment they became bewildered, and soon their blackened forms fell on the edge of the furnace, where a few moments before laid the quiet forms of the sons of Judah!

The king had not accompanied the prisoners to the fatal spot; but still continued, in a surly mood, to sit on his elevated throne. He was far from being satisfied; and he inwardly regretted his

severity toward the best of his officers. Past scenes and transactions rushed to his memory. He thought of their wonderful display of learning on the day of their examination. And had not Ashpenaz, in his opening address, declared, that they would not be required to do anything that would violate their conscience? And had he not authorized the Prince of the Eunuchs to say it? He had. And the color rose to the monarch's cheek. And for this firm decision of character he had thrown them into the fiery furnace! And that dream came to his mind. He rebelled against the interpretation of it it is true; but if there was no God in Israel how could it have been restored in all its parts? He looked at the great image, but it could do nothing. It was but the workmanship of his goldsmiths. It was a great helpless thing; and was no more conscious of the presence of the multitude than was yonder flowing Euphrates; and of itself it could not stand on its own pedestal. But it was a representation of Belus! Yea, truly! But who was Belus? The King of Babylon sat on his magnificent throne of gold, the very embodiment of misery and dissatisfaction.

The furnace was a roofless inclosure, twenty feet square, built of very thick walls in solid masonry. At the height of about twenty-five feet from the ground, on the inside, there were ponderous bars of

iron, that were made to cross each other at right angles, and fastened in the walls, forming the bottom of the furnace, into which the victims were thrown from above. Below, in different parts, were appropriate places for fagots and light combustibles wherewith to heat the furnace. To the lower story there were eight doors or openings; two on each square, through which easy access was obtained to the fire-places. On the outside there was but one entrance to the top. This was by means of massive stone steps. The depth from the edge of the furnace to the cross bars below was fifteen feet, making the whole height, from the ground, forty feet. From above also, there were steps to descend into the bottom. To spectators, on the ground, the victims were not visible after they had been thrown over the edge.

The king unwillingly turned his eyes towards the fiery furnace; and, from his elevation, he could see its interior. He suddenly sprang to his feet, lifted his hands on high, and exclaimed, in a frightened tone:

"O ye gods, what do I behold! What do I behold, O ye gods?" Then, turning to his nobles, he exclaimed: "Do I fancy, or is it real? Turn your eyes on yonder flames! In their midst what behold ye?—speak!"

The nobles tremblingly replied:

"We see men walking unhurt in the midst of the fire, O king!"

"It is even so!" cried the monarch, in deep agitation. "It is *not* a delusion! It is a marvellous reality! But did we not cast in three men bound? But I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt! And the form of the fourth is like unto a son of the gods! Arise, let us hasten to the spot!"

The king, attended by a number of his nobles, and surrounded by the royal guard, was soon on his way towards the raging furnace. The thronging masses quickly divided to give way to their sovereign. There were but few there that knew the cause of the king's agitation. Those who witnessed his countenance attributed it to the awful death of Scribbo and Shagoth. All eyes are fastened on the king. With a hurried pace he ascends the steps of the furnace. He has nearly reached the top. He stops. Now the vast assembly eagerly listen for a royal address. But why turns he not his face toward the throng? Regardless of the swaying masses, he lifts his hand on high—he speaks! Hark! "Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come hither!"

At the conclusion of this, which seemed to the multitude an incomprehensible speech, there were

but few present who did not inwardly pronounce the king to be laboring under a sudden fit of insanity. Stillness prevails throughout the ranks of those gazing thousands! Every eye is fixed on the form of the trembling king! Every ear eagerly watches for some additional proof of his insanity; or something to the contrary, in explanation of his inexplicable address to the already consumed Hebrews.

While all is still and solemn, behold, arm in arm, the lovely forms of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego! A heavenly smile rests on their countenances. Already they have reached the top, and they stand in the presence of the wondering thousands! For a moment they cast a smiling glance on the throng below; then, with that ease of manners which always characterized them, they approach the king, and make their obeisance, with as much apparent good feeling as if nothing of an unkind nature had ever transpired. The king grasped them by the hand, and a mighty shout of good feeling and gladness resounded from thrice ten thousand tongues. The king then, turning to the multitude, in a loud voice, exclaimed:

"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a

decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort. And now, by the command of the king, let that image be taken down, and let it be carried to the temple of Belus, and there, in a secluded part, let it remain."

The assembly was now disbanded and broken up by royal authority. The masses began to move homeward with deep astonishment. The golden image was lost sight of, and the wonderful, miraculous deliverance of the three Hebrews was the all absorbing theme. The priests of Belus were utterly confounded. Their high looks were humbled; their arrogance rebuked; and, in haste, without any display, they made their way to the city. This mighty demonstration of the power of Jehovah soon spread throughout the length and breadth of the land. The numerous Hebrew captives were treated with much more kindness; thousands of Chaldeans lost all confidence in their gods, and learned to pay their homage at the shrine of Jehovah. The triumphs of the "Higher Law" were complete, and the God of the Hebrews honored.

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In a delightful apartment, in the house of Joram,

sat together a happy group. Sorrow on this night had no place among them, and Sadness had recently taken her departure. Joy was in the midst, and gladness triumphantly sat where Grief, of late, had held her throne. There we find a happy admixture of Chaldeans and Hebrews; but all the genuine worshippers of the God of Israel. Joram was there, with his cup of happiness overflowing. By his side sat his wife, with a tear of gladness in her eye. There sat Barzello, surveying the scene with inexpressible delight. There also sat the noble form of Mathias. By his side behold the yet lovely Perreeza, on whose bosom fondly leans her charming young Esrom, over whose head seven summers have fled: his golden tresses falling in rich abundance on his beautiful neck. On the left from Mathias sat his younger brother, Eleazar, with his wife Jupheena by his side. On her bosom again leaned caressingly her little Sarah, now in her fifth year, the very picture of loveliness. In addition to these there were others—the chief attractions of the evening—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. This was their first general meeting since the great transaction on the plains of Dura. We shall not attempt a description of the glowing, bursting raptures of their souls, as they first met. The reader's imagination can supply the deficiency to far better advantage.

Daniel had lately returned from the court of Pharoah, after having arranged all things to the perfect satisfaction of his sovereign, in whose estimation he now stood far higher than ever. The three brothers were held in awe and reverence by all, and the king communed with them freely on all subjects. The wonderful fame of the God of Israel, since the dedication of the great image, had spread far and wide through every part of the realm; and this told well on the condition of the captive Hebrews throughout all Babylonia. Their lives were rendered comparatively comfortable, and, according to the late decree of the king, whosoever dared to speak disrespectfully of their God, did so at his imminent peril. The priests of Belus kept much within their temple, and whenever they appeared in public, it was with far greater modesty and much less arrogance. They were fast losing the confidence of the populace, and the worship of the gods was greatly disregarded. The great Rab Mag was universally admired, and his three companions stood above reproach.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FALLING OF A STAR, AND THE GENTLE SETTING OF A PLANET.

For some years after that wonderful and miraculous display of Divine power, as exhibited before vast thousands on the plains of Dura, Chaldea was comparatively free from wars. The king contented himself with adding to the already magnificent grandeur of the seat of his empire. Thousands were continually employed in carrying out the grand schemes developed by his inventive mind; and no sooner was one mighty enterprise completed, than another project of superior merit was brought forward, and immediately commenced. But the monarch's vast ambition was not to be satisfied by the erection of massive walls and costly edifices. The fire of war and the love of conquest were not yet quenched in his soul. He had a strong passion for the din of battle.

Tyre was a strong and opulent city on the Mediterranean coast of Syria. It was one of the most

celebrated maritime cities of antiquity, and remarkable for its power and grandeur. Hitherto, it had never been subject to any foreign power. It was built by the Sidonians, two hundred and forty years before the Temple of Jerusalem. For Sidon being taken by the Philistines of Askelon, many of its inhabitants made their escape in ships, and founded the city of Tyre; and for the reason we find it called in Isaiah, the "Daughter of Sidon." But the daughter soon surpassed the mother in grandeur, riches, and power.

Toward this proud city of Syria, the King of Babylon, in the twenty-first year of his reign, led his powerful legions, with full confidence of a speedy surrender. With a powerful army he encamped before the city, and soon commenced his attack, which was vigorously repelled; and soon it became evident to the Chaldeans that the subduing of Tyre was not the work of a few days, or even a few months. His troops suffered incredible hardships; so that, according to the Prophet's expression, "every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled:" and not until after a protracted siege of thirteen years was the city conquered, and even then he found nothing to recompense him for the suffering of his army and the expense of the campaign.

Soon after the surrender of Tyre, the King of Babylon led his forces into Egypt, where he was much

more successful than on the shores of the Mediterranean. A large number of provinces were brought to subjection, and thousands of captives were carried to Chaldea, and distributed along the shores of the Euphrates.

When peace was restored, and the king had returned to the capital of the empire, it was not long before he resumed his favorite home business of beautifying and fortifying the city. About this period it reached the very zenith of its glory. It was, indeed, the crowning wonder of the surrounding nations. Its fame was trumpeted throughout all the earth, and its high praises resounded from shore to shore. In its streets were seen the noble and great from other climes, and its palaces were visited by the crowned heads of the world.

The warmth of zeal for the God of Israel, which Nebuchadnezzar manifested on the plains of Dura, was no longer visible. He had but little confidence in the gods of the nation, and towards the God of Heaven, his zeal had dwindled into cold indifference. His impulsive nature required frequent powerful manifestations of Divine power, in order to affect his general deportment. His goodness was like the early dew, that soon disappears before the beams of the morning sun. Now, in regard to this abatement of his zeal for the God of the Hebrews, we may say, that it was nothing very surprising. From his early

childhood he had been a warm idolater; and it was not an easy matter, by any means, to conquer an early prejudice, and to throw away all the remains of early convictions. Add to this, that the King of Chaldea was still in the midst of an idolatrous nation. Those men and women of influence with whom he daily associated, were idolaters; and from their cunning and ingenious lips, high-sounding eulogies were poured into his ears from day to day. These considerations, with many others we might adduce, will throw a little charity over the apostasy of the great potentate. The history of God's own chosen nation, will furnish us more guilty examples of daring apostasy in the persons of individual Hebrews, who had witnessed far more numerous proofs of miraculous power than was ever witnessed by this Gentile king.

God saw that nothing short of a desperate remedy would finally subdue the heart and humble the pride of the haughty monarch; and in mercy to him, as well as a warning to others, the remedy was applied.

The King of Babylon "was at rest in his own house, and flourishing in his own palace." The thoughts of the past, present, and future, deeply occupied his mind. The past of his own history had been crowned with unparalleled success. The present was all that his heart could wish. He found himself surrounded with glory and magnificence that completely eclipsed the splendor of all other nations

combined. The future—ah! the future! Who could penetrate its darkness? Could it be possible that the predictions of Belteshazzar, in regard to the future, were true? Was the glory of Chaldea to be trampled in the dust? Was the kingly line of Nebuchadnezzar so soon to be broken? Was not the kingdom at last established on an immovable foundation? But, had he not, at different times, been convinced that Belteshazzar had been instructed by the God of Heaven in regard to the future? Yea, truly! But many years had passed since then, and his greatness had been daily increasing. The king would have gladly persuaded himself that all was clear in the future, but it was beyond his power, and under a degree of perplexity, he threw himself upon his couch, and his mind was soon absorbed in various conjectures in regard to the transactions of that period into which he was not able to penetrate. He soon became drowsy. The spell was welcomed. He was glad for a while to forget his troubles, and throw himself into the fond embrace of slumber. A few wandering thoughts, and the king was asleep.

* * * * *

"Another dream of troubles!" cried the king, while his countenance bespoke alarm. "Do the gods, indeed, delight in my misery? Why must I be thus tormented? Aye! a dream big with meaning! A vision surcharged with great events! But

who will show me the interpretation thereof? Where is Belteshazzar! But why may not my Chaldean wise men answer the purpose? Yea! Let them have the first trial. Why do I thus tremble? Who shall I fear? 'Hew down the tree!' O, ye gods, how that voice sounded! 'Let his portion be with the beasts, in the grass of the earth!' What meaneth it? Why do I fear to call Belteshazzar *first?* Is it not best at once to know the worst? But let my Chaldeans have the first trial;" and the king called a young page into his presence.

"Young man, where is thy father?"

"My father is in the adjoining chamber, O king."

"Call him hither without delay."

The page hastened from the presence of the king, and presently a venerable looking person walked into the apartment, and bowed in reverence before the king.

"Arioch, it is my desire to see the wise men of Babylon as soon as possible at this apartment. Go! Haste thee! for the command of the king is urgent. Let them be native Chaldeans who appear before me at this time; trouble not Belteshazzar. If I need his services I shall call for him hereafter."

The officer, faithful to his charge, was soon on his way to summon the wise men to appear before the king.

With the knowledge he had of the utter inability

of his wise men, why did the king at this time send for them? And with the knowledge he had of Daniel's superior wisdom, why did he order Arioch to pass him by? The king undoubtedly had a dread of the dream's interpretation; and already he was well aware that from Daniel he could receive nothing of a flattering nature. The troubled monarch was in search of some consolation, and for the time being, against his more serious convictions, he endeavored to persuade himself that he might possibly derive some pleasing satisfaction from the interpretation of his dream by his wise men. However, he had not made up his mind that he would not consult Daniel. He would, in the first place, ascertain what the astrologers would pronounce over his head; and then he would compare their interpretation with that of Belteshazzar.

It was not long before a large number of the Chaldeans stood in the presence of the king, ready to learn his will and do his pleasure.

"Are ye able to give me the correct interpretation of a wonderful dream?" asked the king, in a doubtful tone.

"We surely can, O king!" replied the chief of the wise men; "we derive our knowledge from the gods, and the interpretation of the dream must be sure."

"But what proof do your gods give of their own

existence?" asked the king, looking sternly on the chief.

"Our gods made the world, O king!"

"*Some* gods, or God, made the world; but why not the God of Israel? Can you point to any miraculous interference of *your* gods, in the affairs of mortals? If I have forgotten my dream, can ye, through *your* gods, restore it? And if, in case ye fail, I should cast you all into a fiery furnace, would your gods preserve you unhurt in the midst of the fire? Answer me!"

"Thy servants," said the trembling magician, "from their youth up have been taught to reverence and adore the gods of Chaldea. That there is a God in Israel, we are ready to admit; and far be it from us to hide our convictions from the king, that this God has given us infallible proofs of his power. This we do not admit before the populace: but why should we dissemble before our king? Since the issuing of thy decree on the plains of Dura, we have never said aught against the God of the Hebrews. Let thy servants, I pray thee, find favor in thy sight, and deal not with us harshly!"

"At this time," said the king, "ye are not required to restore a lost dream. I have the vision in all its parts; and, if ye are able, ye may give me the interpretation. If ye are not able, confess your

ignorance, or, by the God of Israel, I'll pour my vengeance on every head!"

The king then carefully rehearsed his dream in their presence. When he had finished he arose, and, approaching the head magician, with a look that made him tremble, he asked:

"Canst thou or thy comrades give me the interpretation of this wonderful dream?"

"The king's dreams are at all times of a very peculiar nature, and far different from ordinary dreams," replied the prince of the magicians. "The king demands honesty at our hands, and may the gods forbid that we should be otherwise. We are not able to give thee the interpretation of thy wonderful dream. We fall on thy mercy! O, deal not harshly with thy servants!"

"Thy simple honesty hath at this time saved thy life and the lives of thy companions! Go your ways, and bear in mind, that ye are a band of hypocritical pretenders. I have demanded your service for the last time!"

The magicians hurried away from the palace, thankful to their stars that they had escaped so well; and never more were their services required in the presence of the king.

"Much as I expected! The vile, deceitful race! The *gods!* Much *they* know about the gods. *Have*

we any gods? I have no proof of any god but the God of the Hebrews. Belteshazzar must at last explain the vision! Why do I dread the knowledge of it? Is this trembling the result of fear? The day is damp and cold. 'Hew down the tree!' That voice was awfully solemn! Why must I remain in this suspense? I will know the worst! If the God of the Hebrews has a quarrel with the King of Babylon, let me know it! Without delay I'll send for Belteshazzar. Young man, inform thy father that the king desires to see him immediately."

The page was soon on his errand, and in a few moments Arioch bowed himself into the apartment.

"Arioch, haste thee, and, in the most respectful manner, inform Belteshazzar that the king desires a short interview with him on business of vital importance."

The captain of the guard was soon at the office of the Rab Mag, to whom he faithfully delivered the message of the king.

The prime minister, always obedient to the demands of his sovereign, hastened into the august presence of Nebuchadnezzar, where he was received with the most profound respect.

"O, Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpreta-

tion thereof. Thus were the visions of my head on my bed: I saw and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto Heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth; the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the vision of my head upon my bed, and behold a watcher, and a holy one came down from Heaven; he cried aloud, and said thus, 'Hew down the tree and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.' This dream I, King Nebu-

chadnezzar, have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation; but thou art able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee."

Then Daniel was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts greatly troubled him.

"Belteshazzar," said the king, "let not the dream or the interpretation thereof give thee pain or uneasiness."

"My lord," said Daniel, "the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. The tree that thou sawest, which grew and was strong, whose height reached into the heavens, and the sight thereof to all the earth, whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the birds of heaven had their habitation, it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one, coming down from Heaven, and saying, hew down the tree and destroy it, yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with the band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with

the beasts of the field till seven times pass over him. This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High which is come upon my lord the king: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beast of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth to whomsoever He will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity."

The king, conscious that the Hebrew was under peculiar inspiration, bowed in solemn reverence, dismissed him in the most respectful manner, and then threw himself on his couch, in the deepest agony of mind.

"The fates are against me! What shall I do? Shall I weep like a woman, and sob like a corrected child? Shall the King of Babylon, the great conqueror of nations, turn at last to be a coward? Shall the great sovereign of Chaldea say he is

sorry, beg pardon of the gods, and thus reduce himself to the level of a common subject? Never! Let all the gods hear it! Never! '*Driven from among men!*' Who shall be able to drive Nebuchadnezzar? '*Eat grass as oxen!*' O, ye gods, is not that laughable? And yet I cannot laugh! Let it come! I fear not the gods! Ah, do I not? I fear not the *gods*, but still I have a dread of that *one* God. I destroyed His temple, I plundered His sanctuary, I carried His vessels to the house of my god, in the land of Shinar. Is He about to retaliate? I shall see. Shall I humble myself before a strange god? Shall I now, after having reached the very pinnacle of fame and glory, dishonor myself in the eyes of my nobles? Nay! Sooner than this, I will brave the vengeance of all the gods, and nobly perish in the unequal conflict!"

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Twelve months have passed away since the King of Babylon was sore troubled by a wonderful dream. His grief was not of long duration, and this period had been one of more than usual gaiety and hilarity in the great city. The king gave continual entertainments on a magnificent scale; and, in the midst of his dazzling splendor, the mournful predictions of Belteshazzar were well-nigh forgotten. Occasionally they would rush to the monarch's mind, but

with a desperate effort they would soon be banished as troublesome intruders and unwelcome guests.

The day was beautifully clear. The king, about the ninth hour of the day, walked upon the roof of his high palace. Babylon, in all its glory, stood before him; its massive walls bidding defiance to all the surrounding nations. The temple of Belus, with its famous tower, stood forth in majestic grandeur, together with the hanging gardens, decorated with all that was beautiful and lovely in nature. Its famous buildings he could count by thousands, and its rich palaces by tens of thousands. The predictions of Daniel found way to the monarch's mind; but they were expelled by a proud spirit and stubborn will. His soul laughed to scorn the dark prophecy.

"What," said the proud monarch, "does this look like 'eating grass like an ox?' Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? Who shall"—Hark! A voice speaks from the heavens! "O, King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee, and they shall drive thee from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee until

thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth to whomsoever he will!"

The voice ceased! The king uttered a loud hysterical laugh, descended from his palace, and ran into his own park, a raving maniac!

* * * * *

Stillness reigns around the house of Joram. No merry little voices fall on the ear of the passer-by. The few that move around the premises tread carefully and silently, while deep solemnity settles on each countenance. The merry voice of song is hushed; the loud peals of melody are no longer heard; and for many a day the "Harp of Judah" has remained in its appropriate little corner, and no delicate hand has swept its well-tuned strings. Inside of that mansion to-day, you witness not that sweet hilarity and innocent joy, that is wont to pervade its apartment. You perceive cheeks wet with tears, and bosoms heaving with sighs. The inmates converse together in solemn whispers, and tread lightly in carefully measured steps. In an apartment richly furnished, into which the penetrating beams of the sun are not permitted to enter, by reason of the heavy curtains drawn closely, we find assembled together a large company of relatives and near friends. It was not an occasion of small import that called them thus together. There we find

Mathias, now a man in the meridian of life, a noble specimen of fair and dignified humanity. There also, is his companion, the lovely Perreeza—the sweet "Rose of Sharon." She is no longer young, but she is still beautiful and fair, with a calm smile of love on her countenance. She is now the mother of two sons and two daughters. They are all present.

Esrom is in his twenty-third year, and is said to bear strongly the image of his father. Monroah is four years younger, and shares largely the beauty of her mother. Jeremiah is in his sixteenth year, and is a fine Hebrew scholar; and is in possession of all the most interesting items in the history of his illustrious namesake. Tulah is in her twelfth year, a fine child; and although a universal pet, she is not spoiled. These are the members of Mathias's family. Why do they not smile?

Eleazar is there also, and so is the ever amiable Jupheena, who is still an ardent worshipper at the shrine of Israel's God. Near them are seated their son and two daughters. Their oldest is Sarah, now a blooming damsel in her nineteenth year. Salome is in his fifteenth year, and in his features you trace far more of the Chaldean than the Hebrew. Sharona is in her tenth year, and is the chief joy of the fond parents. Such are the members of Eleazar's family. But why do they look so sad?

There, also, we see four persons whose appearance

denotes that they are not from the common walks of life. They are attired in rich elegance, and their apparel shows that they hold high offices in the government. They were once called "the youths of Judah;" they are no longer young, but their souls yet thrill with emotion at the very mention of their native land; but on their countenances to-night we look in vain for a smile.

There were others there whom we need not mention. The mother who had long presided over the domestic duties of that household, had been gathered to her people some four years before the scene of this night. Her illness was of short duration. She called her children and grandchildren around her dying couch, invoked upon them the blessing of Jehovah, embraced her weeping companion and calmly sank away. But where, to-night, is Joram? Where is that countenance clothed with smiles, and that voice of joy and gladness? Where is that fond parent, around whom his children and his children's children fondly gathered for so many years, with such strong and cordial affection? Hush! Speak low! Tread lightly! Disturb not the dying moments of the aged Israelite! Joram is approaching the verge of Jordan. Already his feet are touching the cold waters of death. His children and grandchildren are assembled around his dying bed. He breathes with difficulty. By and by, for a short

period, he will find partial relief. The sick man turns on his pillow, and faintly speaks:

"Mathias, why comes he not? Shall I not once more see my most excellent friend?"

"My dear father, he will ere long be here; the messenger is trustworthy, and will soon return."

"The journey of life is near its close! The holy hill is in sight! I pass through the vale of death on my way to the better land! Yonder is the home of the faithful. Sorrow and mourning shall flee away!"

"He is here! He is here!" cried Jupheena.

"Has he arrived?" asked the sick man, in faint accents.

"Yea, my dear father," replied Mathias, in soothing tones, "he has arrived."

"Thanks be to Jehovah!"

Presently, a man of venerable appearance, his hair silvered over with age, apparently a Chaldean, slowly walked into the apartment. Jupheena was the first to greet him: she fell on his neck, and warmly embraced him in silence.

"Jehovah bless my lovely daughter!" whispered the aged man, as the large tears coursed down his furrowed cheeks. For a moment he looked around upon the company, with an earnestness of affection not easily described; and looking up to heaven, in trembling accents broke forth—

"Oh, Jehovah, let the smiles of Thy countenance rest on these Thy chosen ones!"

The venerable man was then taken and gently led by Mathias to the bedside of his father.

A sweet smile passed over the pale countenance of Joram; the fountain of his tears overflowed; he looked up to the face of his old friend, reached out his trembling hand, and cried—

"Ah! my good Barzello! thou hast come once more to see thy friend Joram, before he leaves for the spirit land."

"If thou art to go first," replied the weeping old soldier, "we shall not long be separated; with me, also, the battle of life will soon be closed, and the weary warrior shall be called home."

"I find, Barzello, that my race is well-nigh run! I am fast passing away. I have a strong impression that this day I shall join the society of immortals; therefore I thought fit to send for my best friend, to be with me in my dying moments. I am spared to see good old age. For the last thirty years my cup of joy has been often filled and running over. My children have been the consolation of my latter days, and my grandchildren have rendered sweet my declining years. Jehovah has dealt with His servant in great kindness. The iniquities of my youth are forgiven—I am at peace with the God of Israel."

The sick man now desired to be raised a little higher on his pillow.

"That is better. Now I can see you all. How dearly your dying father loves you! We soon must part, my sun is fast sinking, and in a few hours Joram will be gone. The chariot will soon call. I chide you not for your tears, for here on earth I know too well their value. In that bright world above where Jehovah dwells, and where angels spread their wings, no tears are found. Children, draw nigh, and receive my parting blessing."

The two sons, bathed in tears, fell on their knees by the side of the couch of the dying man. The father placed his hands on their heads, and in silent petition invoked upon them the blessing of Jehovah. They arose. Next, with audible sobs, Perreeza and Jupheena bowed together. Joram was deeply affected. "May the 'Lily of the Valley' and the 'Rose of Sharon' continue to be bright examples of humility and virtue, until Jehovah, in His own time, shall see fit to transplant the Lily and the Rose to bloom in brighter climes, and flourish in richer soil." The grandchildren then followed, and received the last blessing of the aged sire. The scene was deeply solemn and impressive. Tears flowed freely, and lamentations filled the apartment.

Joram, quite exhausted, closed his eyes, and deep

silence for a while prevailed. He soon revived, and called for Perreeza.

"What can I do for my ever-dear father?" whispered Perreeza, putting her face low to his ear.

"One more little song, daughter, accompanied by the harp of Judah," said Joram, with a smile, "and I ask no more."

"But, O father, Perreeza greatly fears that it will disturb thee."

"Nay, my sweet child, thy Uncle Esrom was never yet disturbed by the sound of melody. Sing to me that little song thy aunt so dearly loved."

"Oh, my dear father," whispered the weeping Perreeza, "I fear it is beyond my power to sing. I am filled with weeping. Yet, at thy request, I will make the effort. Oh, God of my fathers, help me!"

"He will, my child," faintly answered the old Israelite; "get thy harp and sing."

Once again the old harp was brought from its little corner. Perreeza wiped away her tears, and succeeded wonderfully in conquering her emotions. She took the familiar instrument in her arms, and sat at a little distance from the dying saint. Joram cast one look on the old harp, smiled, and gently closed his eyes. Perreeza gently touched the chords and sang:

"Father, send Thy heavenly chariot,
Call Thy weeping child away;
Long I've waited for Thy coming,
Why, O why, this long delay?
Of this earth my soul is weary,
Yonder lies the better land;
Fain my soul would leave its prison,
Glad to join the glorious band.

"Thrice ten thousand happy spirits,
Sing Thy praise in Heaven above;
All arrayed in robes of glory,
Crowned with righteousness and love;
Old companions wait to greet me,
Smilingly they bid me come:
Father, send Thy heavenly chariot,
Call Thy weary pilgrim home.

"Earth is fading from my vision!
Brightness gathers o'er my head!
Thrilling strains from Heavenly harpers,
Sound around my dying bed!
Blessed land of saints and angels!
Here I can no longer stay;
Yonder comes my Father's chariot!
Rise, my soul, and haste away!"

The song was ended. The harp was laid aside.

"Did my father enjoy the song?" soothingly inquired Mathias. Joram made no reply! Those features were settled! Those eyes were set! The "chariot" had arrived, and Joram had departed! As the last vibrations of the "harp of Judah" died on the ear, his happy soul was wafted on angelic pinions, and introduced to the melody of more skillful harpers around the throne of God.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAST BATTLE OF A GREAT WARRIOR.

Since the insanity of Nebuchadnezzar Evil-Merodach, his son had acted as regent. The misfortune of the Chaldean monarch had thrown a deep gloom over the vast empire. He fell in the midst of his popularity, and the government throughout felt the shock. Evil-Merodach was far from being a favorite, and among all classes in the nation there seemed to be a growing dissatisfaction in regard to his movements. This feeling would have been immeasurably greater had it not been for the wisdom and vigilance of Belteshazzar, his prime minister. Of Daniel's superhuman wisdom the regent had no doubt. From his intimacy with his father he had learned all the particulars in regard to Daniel's interpretation of the dream; and seeing before his eyes daily a literal fulfillment of its awful predictions, he could not but hold the interpreter in much reverence.

Nearly seven years had already passed away since

the awful humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar. During most of this time he had exhibited all the signs of a maniac. As he showed no disposition to injure those around him he was permitted to go at large, within royal inclosures. His treatment was much according to the direction of Daniel, who was the only person at the palace of whom the maniac king appeared to have the least recognition. He carefully shunned the presence of every one; and the only thing that appeared to give him satisfaction, and check his raving, was a permission to be a companion of his oxen, that quietly fed in the palace park. Here it may be well to remark, that the peculiar feature of the king's insanity, was the strange conviction that he was an ox; and under this conviction he would endeavor to imitate that animal in all its motions and voices. He was never confined, nor bound with chains, but permitted to enjoy himself as his maniac fancies might dictate. This was not the result of indifference, but quite the contrary. The king was held in much respect at the palace, even in the midst of his deplorable insanity; and there was much faith placed in the opinion of Daniel in regard to the king's final restoration to his reason and the kingdom. Among many of Daniel's Chaldean friends at the Court, the opinion was becoming prevalent, that the interesting occasion was not far distant.

The afternoon was fair and beautiful. It was about the ninth hour of the day. Daniel, weary with his arduous duties within, thought fit, in order to invigorate both his body and mind, to take a pleasant walk amid the delightful groves of the palace park. So he laid his papers aside, and was soon under the refreshing breezes of the open skies. The scene was truly delightful. The sun was gradually losing the intensity of its heat, and slowly sinking toward the western hills. Nature was adorned in beauty and lovely innocence. The sweet choristers of the forest chanted their melodious sonnets on the high branches, and the forest rang with the sound of praise from the feathered tribe. The proud Euphrates rolled majestically along, while its shores were strewed with the choicest roses and flowers. On the banks of "proud Euphrates' stream" the Rab Mag sat down and gave freedom to his thoughts, which quickly turned to meditate on the past.

"His paths are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out! He reigns in heaven above, and on earth beneath. Jehovah is God alone. By Him kings rule and princes govern. He taketh down one and setteth up another. O Lord, Thou art very great, and highly exalted above all gods. In Thy hands are the deep places of the earth, the strength of the hills are Thine also. I adore Thee, O my

God! I praise Thee, O Jehovah! From my youth the God of Israel has been my help. He has brought me through ways I had not known. How terrible is His wrath toward those who rebel against Him! How great His love to all that fear Him! He bringeth down the proud look, and causeth His enemies to be ashamed. The sceptres of kings are broken in pieces. Jehovah is King of kings! Babylon, with all her glory, shall become a desolation. Her lofty towers shall fall, her walls shall be destroyed, her palaces shall become heaps of ruin, and her idol temples shall be no more!"

Such were the meditations of Daniel when his attention was called to a rustling noise in the foliage, on his right, at a short distance from the spot on which he sat. He looked, and beheld the uncouth form of the maniac king slowly approaching toward him! The sight affected the Hebrew's heart! His eye became moistened with tears. His punishment was just he knew; but in the history of that degraded monarch, he could find many things to admire. In other days he had a heart that throbbed with kind and warm emotions. Had he not in the main been kind to him, and his three companions? And, in the midst of envy and jealousy, had he not kept them, foreigners as they were, in the highest offices in the gift of the government? He had. And Daniel's heart throbbed with pity as he beheld

the brutish antics of one who was once so powerful and intelligent! The king gradually approached the spot where Daniel sat, without observing him; sometimes standing erect, other times running on all fours. Sometimes uttering some incoherent expressions, other times bellowing like an ox.

"God of my fathers!" silently cried Daniel, "let this suffice! According to Thy promise restore the unhappy king to his reason, and let his courtiers know that there is no god like unto Thee!"

By this time the maniac stood close by the side of his courtier, but as yet he had not observed him.

"Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon!" cried Daniel, with a loud voice.

The maniac was startled, looked up to the face of the intruder for a moment, cried, in loud accents, "Belteshazzar! Belteshazzar!" and, as if greatly terrified, ran. He soon stopped, and stood at a certain distance, with his wild, flashing eyes steadfastly fixed on the form of the Rab Mag.

Daniel arose, and slowly directed his footsteps towards the spot. He was glad to find that the king remained stationary. He approached within a respectful distance of the maniac, uncovered his head, made his humble obeisance as in days of yore, and cried:

"O king, live for ever!"

The king, in silence, continued to gaze on Daniel, with a wild, vacant stare.

"Jehovah, the God of Israel!" cried Daniel, pointing with his finger to the skies.

"J-e-h-o-v-a-h!" slowly whispered the king, gazing upward.

The Hebrew now ventured nearer the king, fell down on his knees, and, "with his face toward Jerusalem," sent his urgent, silent petitions to the God of Israel, in behalf of his unfortunate sovereign. Daniel had not been long in prayer before the king, with restored reason, fell down by his side and loudly rejoiced, and praised the God of Heaven. The set time had come: the prayer of the man of God had, indeed, prevailed, the lost was found, the maniac was restored.

The restoration of reason to the king was brought about by the same miraculous power that deprived him of it; and it was accomplished in the same sudden manner. He was not only restored to the right use of his faculties, but also to a perfect recollection of the past. The dream, its interpretation, with all subsequent transactions up to the very day of his insanity, were brought clearly to his mind; but since that moment all was one dark void. In mercy, not a vestige was permitted to remain to embitter his after years.

The most important thing that now appeared to occupy the monarch's mind, was the life and health of his family, and the length of the period of his insanity.

"Tell me, O Belteshazzar, how long has the King of Babylon remained in this degraded condition."

"Seven years of deep calamity, O king, have passed over thy head."

"Seven years!" cried the king, with a trembling voice, while his tears were fast falling. "O Thou God of Heaven, Thou art just in all Thy ways? But are the members of my family spared to see the restoration of the king?"

"They are all spared, and in good health, O king! and will be overjoyed to see thee restored to thy throne."

"Jehovah is the only God! He ruleth among the armies of the heavens, and the inhabitants of the earth. Let all nations praise the God of Israel! But come, Belteshazzar, let us bend our footsteps towards the palace."

Daniel threw one of his loose garments over the almost naked form of the king, and, side by side, they started towards the palace royal. On their way thither, they were met by the captain of the guard. The old soldier was overwhelmed with joy, to hear once more the familiar voice of his beloved king. He fell before him, and would have embraced his feet if only permitted. He begged of the king to remain where he was with Belteshazzar, and permit him to haste to the palace, to herald the joyful news, and return with the king's old guard, to escort him home. The measure struck the king favorably, and Arioch, with a bounding heart, was on his way. The regent, Evil-Merodach, was first apprised of the fact, which he received with demonstrations of joy.

The news was soon understood by hundreds, and the palace rang with shouts of rejoicing. The regent, with the guard, were soon on the march for the place where Arioch had left the king. When they reached the spot, the monarch arose and gently bowed. His son now ran up to his father, fell on his neck, and both warmly embraced each other. The old royal guard, as soon as their emotions were partially subsided, approached as near his majesty as they could, and, at a given signal from their captain, they broke forth in one grand shout that made the forest ring. The king was deeply moved: he endeavored to speak, but was not able.

The procession was on its way. The king, with his son and the prime minister, were drawn in the royal chariot. Shouts of joy echoed on the high turrets of the royal mansion as the restored monarch entered once more through its massive portals, to sit on the throne of his empire. Heralds were hurried into every part of the city to acquaint officials of the king's restoration, and on that night the great metropolis of Chaldea was brilliantly illuminated; and loud shouts of rejoicing burst forth from thousands of gladdened hearts.

The king resumed the responsible duties of his government, amid the warm congratulations and the best wishes of his courtiers and subjects. New life was breathed into every department of State, and the metropolis once more appeared to breathe the breath of former years.

Belteshazzar was now to the king a constant and confiding friend. They conversed together freely on

all points, and no measure was put forth without the consent and approbation of the Rab Mag.

In regard to the God of Israel no doubt remained longer on the mind of the king. At last he was wholly saved from idolatry. The process of his conversion had been a severe one; but in the hand of Jehovah it had proved successful. His vanity was conquered, his haughtiness slain, the pride of his heart subdued, he was a meek and lowly worshipper at the shrine of the God of Israel.

The king was getting well stricken in years, and he was conscious that he was not long for earth. Therefore, like a wise man, he bestowed much thought on that world into which he was fast hastening. His worldly ambition was at an end, he appeared but seldom in public, and was much given to retirement and meditation. He had at last learned to see the things of earth in their true light, and the enthusiasm of his younger friends was viewed with a smile and a sigh. He clearly saw in the distance the glory of Babylon brought to the dust, and its majestic halls resounding with the voice of revelry from the sons and daughters of strangers. Of this the reformed king could not think without painful emotions; but it was vain to repine, and with a wonderful degree of resignation, he bowed to the Will divine.

* * * * *

Babylon was again in gloom. Nebuchadnezzar, who had so long stood at the helm of government, and under whose reign the nation had reached its high distinction, and the city its proud eminence,

was sick, and, to all human appearance, was nigh unto death.

It was yet early in the morning, when a messenger from the king was sent in haste to the apartments of the Hebrew officer, with special directions demanding his presence without delay at the king's chamber. The summons was instantly obeyed, and not many minutes elapsed before Daniel stood by the couch of the sick monarch. In faint accents he was thanked for his punctuality, and was beckoned to a seat. He then gave his attendants to understand, that inasmuch as he had some business of importance with his officer, they might for a while retire. When alone he turned, and gently said:

"Draw nigh to the king, Belteshazzar. I have seen fit to send for thee in haste at this time, for I perceive that I am fast passing away. My weary journey is near its end. Soon I shall close my eyes in death; my weary soul shall shortly be released from its bondage, and haste away to a land of rest. How fading all terrestrial glory! How transient every earthly bliss! Human pomp and grandeur, Oh how vain! My life has been short and full of trouble. In the pride of my heart I sought to outstrip the Almighty! I said, 'Who can bring low the King of Babylon?' I insultingly provoked the God of Heaven, and defied Jehovah to his face! I set up my own will against the will of the Highest. I would acknowledge no higher law than my own edicts. Before tens of thousands, on the plains of Dura, I was rebuked. The God of Israel vindicated the honor of His law in the miraculous

deliverance of His faithful worshippers. Before my lords I was compelled to acknowledge the superiority of the law of Jehovah. The gods of Chaldea were put to shame, and the Higher Law was triumphant. For some time those impressions remained on my mind, and served in part to check and bridle my unholy ambition; but gradually they wore away: my pride revived, my gods were set up, I encouraged extravagances, and the name of the God of Israel was well-nigh forgotten. I dreamed a dream, which my wise men could not interpret. The servant of the God of Heaven was called. My doom was made known. Instead of bowing in humility before Jehovah, I rebelled against the interpretation, and said, in my heart, 'It never shall be!' I endeavored to forget God in the multiplicity of my banquets, and in the abundance of my merry gatherings. I succeeded; but the day of doom arrived, and my humiliation was complete. In mercy I was again restored, and established on my throne; but soon the sceptre of Chaldea must be swayed by another hand. The days of my toil are nearly numbered. In thee, O Belteshazzar, I have always found the most faithful of officers. To thy wise management we are indebted for the great prosperity that has attended my reign. Accept now the humble thanks of thy sovereign. Since my restoration I have devoted much time to meditation and prayer. In this I find great pleasure and satisfaction. At the close of life I have found out the grand secret of human happiness. Great has been my loss in not finding it sooner. My more special

object in calling for thee at this time was, that I might deliver to thee this parchment, which I have carefully prepared with my own hand. It bears upon an important era in my eventful history; and, in justice to my own people, as well as to other nations, and above all, in justice to the God of Heaven, I command that it be carefully recorded among the State parchments. By delivering it over to thee, my faithful officer, I am sure that my wishes shall be fulfilled. Take them, Belteshazzar, and let them be recorded without delay."

"Faithfully, O king, will thy servant in this thing do thy pleasure and command," said Daniel, and silently he left the presence of the king, and hastened to his apartments.

On opening the parchment he found it to contain the following; written carefully and correctly, in the handwriting of the king himself:

"Nebuchadnezzar, the king, unto all people, and nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth; peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and His dominion is from generation to generation.

"I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream, which made me afraid; and I was greatly troubled. I, therefore, made a decree, to bring all the wise men of Babylon into my presence, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the

dream. There came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers, and I told the dream before them, but they were not able to give me the interpretation thereof. But at last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and before him I told the dream, saying, 'O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the vision of the dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof. Thus was the vision of my head in my bed. I saw and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and its fruit much, and in it was meat for all; the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the air dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in my vision, and behold a watchman, and a holy one came down from heaven, and cried aloud, and said, 'Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass

over him. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.' This dream I, Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation, but thou art able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

"Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. Then spake I unto him, saying, 'Let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee.'"

"Then answered Daniel—'My lord, let the dream be to those that hate thee, and its interpretation to thine enemies. The tree that thou sawest is thyself, O king; thou art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reaches unto heaven; and thy dominion unto the end of the earth. And whereas, the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, 'Hew the tree down and destroy it, yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him;' this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king. They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field,

and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou knowest that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots, thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsels be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. If it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.'

"All this came upon me, King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months I walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and said, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?' While the word was yet in my mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, 'Oh, King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, thy kingdom is departed from thee.' I was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and my body was wet with the dew of heaven. At the end of the days I lifted up mine eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High; and I praised and honored Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What

doest thou? And the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness, returned unto me, and my counsellors, and my lords sought unto me, and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

* * * * *

The great monarch of Chaldea is about to pass away to the spirit land. A number of his most intimate and choice friends stand with solemn visages around the couch of the dying potentate. Daniel had spent most of his time, of late, at the palace, administering to the comfort of his afflicted sovereign, and the king was ill at ease, unless his faithful officer was near at hand. It was the Hebrew's hand that gently eased his position; it was the Hebrew's voice that soothed his troubled spirits. For forty years Daniel, without the least deviation, had proved faithful to the interest of his lord the king; and now, in his last hours, his fidelity was as strong as ever. With a tender hand he wiped the cold sweat of death from the pale brow of the monarch, and inwardly breathed his earnest petition to the God of Israel, for a safe transit to the Gentile king from idolatrous Chaldea to the Mount of God, and the City of the Faithful. The king was fast sinking. His feet already touched the cold waters of death. One of the most powerful monarchs that ever swayed a sceptre was about to surrender to the universal conqueror. His sentences were few and wandering;

and the once eloquent tongue refused to perform its office with its wonted readiness. Since his restoration to reason, his mind was much taken up with things that more particularly pertained to his eternal welfare beyond these mortal shores. To-night the burning fever had disturbed the calm repose of his mind; reason was partially dethroned, and once again he was a mighty warrior at the head of his numerous troops.

"Onward, warriors, to victory or death!" cried the delirious king, and there was a pause.

"Know ye the vision? Away from my presence, ye guilty band of lying hypocrites!" and there was another pause.

"Prepare the chariots! Onward to the conflict!"

"Arioch!"

The venerable old captain, with tears coursing down his cheeks, gently approached the king, and in tender accents asked—

"And what is the pleasure of my lord the king?"

The king slowly unclosed his eyes, gazed on the countenance of his old soldier, and for a few minutes reason again proved triumphant.

"Ah! my faithful officer, thou art ever near! Arioch, I have conquered many an enemy—I have fought many a battle—I am now in a struggle with the last foe. I am fighting my last battle. I soon shall have to surrender! Where is my good friend Belteshazzar?"

"I am near thy side, O king!" replied Daniel, in gentle tones.

"Merodach!"

"Father!"

"Ah! my son, thou art here. This day I leave thee, and the vast responsibilities of the empire are committed to thy care. My words must be few. I am near the end of my journey. To thy kind regards I commit these my faithful officers. Let not one of them fail to share thy confidence and respect. To Belteshazzar, we are greatly indebted for our prosperity. Let the Hebrews within the realm be dealt gently by. Their God is the God of nations. When— When— When—" and the king was again in feverish delirium.

"Haste thee, Arioch, and order the royal guard! Ah, my good Barzello, we meet again! Thou art *not* dead! Onward! Onward, brave warriors! The steeps are hard to climb! Leave me not, Barzello! Onward! We have gained the heights! But who can cross the river? Onward! Onward! Why move not the legions? Warriors, follow your king! The waters are deep! d– d– deep! Barzello, give me thy hand! Now we go! Oh, the river is— is— d-e-e-p!" and the voice sank into a low whisper.

A few struggles with the waves, and the Chaldean Emperor had reached the opposite shore. He had crossed a river through which his legions could not then follow him. His features became calm and tranquil, and a sweet smile was left on the lifeless lips of the King of Babylon.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN WHICH A FAMOUS HERO IS SPOKEN OF.

On the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach took the throne. Of this man we have said but little. He acted as regent during his father's insanity, and conducted himself with some degree of propriety. He was, however, a person of a low, grovelling mind, and no sooner was he established on his throne than he began to give unmistakable signs that the sceptre was in the hands of a profligate tyrant. Contrary to the request of his dying father, he neglected the weighty matters of the empire, and plunged into dissipation and gluttonous revelry.

As with the commencement of Nebuchadnezzar's reign began the real glory of Chaldea, and so continued to increase, so with his death the glory departed, and the empire was soon in a rapid decline. No feature in the character of the new king was in the least calculated to command either the love or admiration of his subjects. He was inwardly cursed by the nation, and feared only on account of his cruelty. Of Daniel he had some dread, and over him the Hebrew had some control. He was well convinced, from what he had seen in his father's history, that

Daniel was not to be slighted, and that among all the wise men of the realm there was none like him. And, moreover, he was well aware that his superior wisdom had had much to do in elevating the empire to its present high position. Through the kind influence of this man of God, the wicked king dealt with comparative mildness toward the captive Hebrews so numerous within the realm.

The reign of this monarch was of short duration. Some of his own relatives conspiring against him, put an end to his existence; and so died Evil-Merodach, unwept by the nation, and Nerriglisser, one of the chief conspirators, reigned in his stead.

The three brothers, since the death of Nebuchadnezzar, had seen best to retire from public life. In Babylon they were greatly beloved, and considered as the peculiarly favored of the gods, and over whom no mortals had control. Their miraculous deliverance from the fiery furnace had been transmitted from fathers to sons, and from mothers to daughters; and there was in Babylon what we might term an universal blind belief in the God of Israel. Barzello was no more; he soon followed his friend Joram. The same "chariot" arrived, and he was triumphantly carried away.

Mathias and Eleazar were among the most influential men in the city. Since the death of the veneable soldier, Eleazar had taken possession of those beautiful premises which had been left as a legacy to his only daughter. Perreeza often speaks of her native land, and is still strong in the faith, that when the time shall come to favor Zion, she will, with

her three brothers, return to her native city, and rest their bones in the burial-ground of their fathers. To this, Mathias and the children have consented, being full as desirous as Perreeza to end their days in the land of Israel.

Nerriglisser, immediately on his accession to the throne, made great preparations for war against the Medes, which preparations lasted for some three years. Cyaxeres, king of the Medes, seeing the hostile attitude of the Babylonians, sent to Persia, imploring the help of his young nephew Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, king of Persia, who had married his sister Mandana. Now Cyrus was beautiful in person, and still more lovely in the qualities of his mind; was of very sweet disposition, full of good nature and humanity, and always had a great desire to learn, and a noble ardor for glory. He was never afraid of any danger, or discouraged by any hardship or difficulty, where honor was to be acquired. He was brought up according to the laws and customs of the Persians, which were excellent in those days with respect to education. With the consent of his father, he readily complied with the wish of his uncle, and at the head of thirty thousand well trained Persians, he marched into Media, and from thence to Assyria, to meet the forces of Neriglisser, king of Babylon, and the forces of Crœsus, king of the Lydians. The armies met. The Chaldeans were routed. Crœsus fled, and Nerriglisser, the king of Babylon, was slain in the action, and his son Laboros-barchod succeeded to the throne.

This was a very wicked prince. Being naturally

of the most vicious inclinations, he now indulged them without restraint, as if he had been invested with sovereign power only to have the privilege of committing with impunity the most infamous and barbarous actions. He reigned but five months, his own subjects conspiring against him, put him to death, and Belshazzar, the son of Evil-Merodach, reigned in his place.

Since the death of Evil-Merodach, and during the reign of his two successors, Daniel had been much neglected, and he had retired to private life, and was but little spoken of at public places. This king, following in the footsteps of his predecessors, led a life of dissipation and profligacy.

In the meantime, the fame of the Persian prince was spreading far and wide. His armies proved victorious on every shore; and to the faithful Hebrews, who discerned the signs of the times, his conquests were hailed with inward joy. Cyrus for some years had tarried in Asia Minor, and had entirely reduced all the nations that inhabited it to subjection, from the Ægean Sea to the River Euphrates. From thence he proceeded to Syria and Arabia, which he also subdued.

The fortifications of Babylon, since the death of Nebuchadnezzar, had been strengthened, and now the work of fortifying was carried onward with great vigor. Belshazzar, if from no other motive than fear, gave all encouragement to this kind of improvement, and during his reign prodigious works of this nature were completed. He was well aware that the famous Persian had his eye upon him, and that the

besieging of the city with him was but a question of time. He therefore made all preparations for a formidable attack. Provisions of all kinds, from all parts of the country, were stored up within this city in great abundance; and every thing was put in readiness to withstand a protracted siege.

Cyrus, whom Divine Providence was to make use of as an instrument for the execution of his vast designs, was mentioned in the Scriptures *by his name* above one hundred and fifty years before he was born; and that the world might not be surprised at the prodigious rapidity of his conquests, God was pleased to declare, in very lofty and remarkable terms, that he would be his guide, and that in all his expeditions he would lead him by the hand, and would subdue all the princes of the earth before him:

"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him. And I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight. I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut asunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the Lord which call thee by thy name am the God of Israel; for Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name. I have surnamed thee though thou hast not known me." Isa. xiv. 1–4.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN WHICH A POTENTATE IS GREATLY FRIGHTENED.

The army of Cyrus had already reached the capital of Chaldea. The vast plain before the city swarms with moving thousands of Medes and Persians. At this time no warriors were finer in appearance and possessing more valor than the battlemen of the Persian prince. Their discipline had reached to an almost inconceivable degree of perfection. The wishes and desires of their great commander had become their law; and each one vied with the other in rendering obedience to his orders. Their fame and conquests had spread throughont lower Asia, and through many parts of Assyria, and each victory added to their brilliancy.

But the Babylonians thought themselves so well prepared for this emergency, that the numerous legions of Cyrus failed to alarm them. Their walls they considered proof against any attack, and they had sufficient amount of provision in the city for twenty years. They laughed to scorn the demand of the Persians, and loudly ridiculed them from the city walls. Belshazzar and his counsellors considering themselves perfectly secure, gave way to all

their vile passions and depraved appetites. The palace was one great scene of debauchery and lewd revelry by day and by night.

The Persian general soon saw that an assault on such formidable defences would be useless. A project was conceived in his mind of such a novel character that we are more than ever convinced that his stratagems were originated in the mind of the Hebrews' God. He made the inhabitants believe that he intended to reduce the city by famine. To this end he caused a line of circumvallation to be drawn quite around the city with a large and deep ditch; and that his troops might not be over-fatigued he divided his army into twelve bodies, and assigned to each of them its month for guarding the trenches. The great ditch was completed, but the revelrous Babylonians little thought of its real design, as conceived in the ingenious mind of their great antagonist.

Belshazzar the king, made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. This feast was one of great splendor. The most spacious and magnificent rooms in the richest city in the world, were crowded with rank and beauty. Learning, aristocracy and royalty were there. Precious stones and costly perfumery filled the saloon with dazzling lustre and sweetest fragrance. Wit sparkled with the sparkling of the cups, and reason flowed with the flowing of the wine. They drank toasts of enthusiastic patriotism; they sang songs of unbounded loyalty, and shouted defiance to every

foe. Strains of melody poured forth from an hundred instruments, and hilarity and excessive mirth beamed forth from every countenance. The high praises of the gods of Chaldea, with rapturous shouts in honor to their king mingled together, and broke forth from a thousand tongues. The besieging army with its commander, together with the God of the Hebrews, were made the constant sport of their licentious wit, and the subjects of their keenest sarcasm.

This feast was given in honor of Belshazzar's birth; and we may easily judge that flattery without measure was poured into his willing ear. On this occasion, from the very nature of the festival, much was expected from the monarch himself, and it was very evident that he was fully determined that in this they should not be disappointed.

"All hail, brave Babylonians! welcome! Thrice welcome to the presence of your king! Before me on this night I behold the pride and glory of Babylon. Here are my nobles who have at all times distinguished themselves by their valor and great bravery. Let us banish gloom, and let our hearts overflow with mirth! We may well congratulate ourselves on the perfect safety of Babylon. Our walls are impregnable and our possessions are abundant. We laugh to scorn the silly movements of the Persian mule that parades before the city. Dark predictions there are I know in regard to the future of Chaldea; but these Hebrew delusions have well-nigh vanished away. I am sorry to confess that my royal grandsire gave too much countenance to these groundless delusions, in the preferment of the Hebrew

Belteshazzar with his three companions to high offices within the province of Babylon. This, my lords, was a grand mistake of the past, for which we have already too dearly paid. Since I came to the throne, this intermeddling of foreigners with the affairs of the nation, has received no countenance; and happy am I to know that to-day all offices under the government are entrusted to none but pure native Chaldeans. In this I do not wish to cast a shade on the memories of the illustrious dead, for truly no monarch ever distinguished himself with greater glory than my lamented grandfather. The trophies of his victories are to-day visible throughout the empire. To him, indeed, the gods of Chaldea were propitious, and unmistakable proof they gave, of their superiority to the gods of other nations. We have heard much of the renowned god of the Hebrews! But under the protection of our own, we bid defiance to all other gods! Who is the god of Israel that I should fear him? Did not my grandfather, under the guidance of the gods of Chaldea, enter into his territory, destroy his city and burn his temple? Why did he not then vindicate his power and glory? Why permit the vessels of his temple to be carried into Babylon, and there be deposited in the temple of Belus? Ah, my lords! those vessels were worthy of a more trusty god. They are beautiful to behold, and would well become an occasion like the present. Surely this is well thought! Let the vessels of the temple of the God of Israel be brought hither, and from them let us drink wine in honor to the gods of Chaldea! Bring them hither in haste! My

thirst increases with the thought! All praise to our matchless gods! Again I say, let us banish gloom, and let us be filled with mirth! But here indeed, come the temple vessels of the god of Israel! Bring them hither! Look ye here, Babylonians! Saw ye ever anything more beautiful? Such fine specimens of art as these must be rendered serviceable in the employ of more worthy gods! Let them be filled with wine! Let us drink to the gods of the empire, and if there is a God in Israel let Him come to the rescue! We defy His power, Chaldeans! These Hebrews among us must be limited in their privileges. The worship of their imaginary God, if at all permitted, must be on a more private scale. They are corrupting in their influence, and their liberties must be restricted. This I have accomplished in a measure, and by the gods, I swear that in this, my pleasure must be realized to the full. These foreigners, through the unwise policy of my grandfather, have too long lived in ease, and many of them have been unwisely elevated to fill the most responsible offices in the gift of the government, to the exclusion of Chaldeans, and more worthy men. Of this we shall hear no more complaint. I have cut short the work, and not one Hebrew remains in office within the empire. Babylonians! in this has not the king met your wishes? Your joyous looks and merry countenances answer 'yea!' Let this then be our motto, 'Chaldeans to rule Chaldea!' Drink! drink freely! Drink to the gods! Is there a God in Israel? Let Him come and claim the vessels of His sanctuary! O, the wine tastes deliciously

from these thy golden goblets! O, thou god of Israel! Ha, ha, ha! More wine! Let us rejoice and be glad, and drink defiance to all gods, save the gods of Chaldea! Who shall Belshazzar fear? What god can alarm the king of Bab—"

The vessel fell from the monarch's hand! Paleness gathered on his brow! A sudden trembling shook his whole frame! A cry of terror broke from his quivering lips. Horror-struck, he continued to gaze on yonder wall! The company followed the direction of his eye, and they also beheld the solemn mystery, and shrieks of fear burst forth from wives and concubines! "Fear took hold of them there," and deep solemnity fell upon the drunken throng.

On the wall, over against the candlestick, there appeared the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote on the plaster. This was the mysterious sight that gave terror to the king and alarmed the merry throng.

"Haste ye," cried the terrified king, "and bring hither my wise men, and let them give me the signification of the writing. Go in haste! My demands are urgent; let not a moment be lost!"

Messengers were speedily hurried hence to summon the magicians and wise men into the presence of the monarch, and within a short period the whole "college" stood before the agitated sovereign in the midst of the banqueting-hall.

"Look ye yonder!" said the king, with a trembling voice, pointing to the mysterious writing. "Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scar-

let and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

The wise men gazed in silent astonishment on the writing, cast solemn glances at one another, and at last frankly confessed that it was written in a language with which they had no acquaintance—peradventure, understood only by the gods.

"What shall I do?" cried the king, in deep agony. "I fear some awful calamity is about to befall me! A curse upon these pretenders! Depart from my presence! O ye gods! what shall I do?"

The great fear of the king had been made known to the queen-mother, the famous Nitocris, wife of Nebuchadnezzar. She hastened to the banquet-chamber, where she found all in the greatest consternation, especially the king, who trembled like an aspen-leaf.

"O king, live for ever!" cried the queen-mother. "Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor thy countenance thus be changed in the presence of thy mighty lords, lest hereafter they despise thy fear. There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy grandfather, light and understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king, Nebuchadnezzar, thy grandfather—I say *the king himself*, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; and this was a sure sign of his superior wisdom. This great man is not found among *thy* nobles. Since in thy great wisdom thou didst see fit to deprive all Hebrews from offices, this

mighty Daniel, whom thy grandfather called Belteshazzar, has been seen but seldom. But be it known to thee, O king, that he is not utterly forgotten. *I* have had my eye upon him, and know well the place where he dwelleth. Forasmuch, then, as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in him, permit this *Hebrew foreigner*—this same Daniel, to be called, and he will show thee the interpretation of the mysterious writing."

Without delay, messengers were sent to the house of Daniel, and in a short time a venerable person, with his head silvered over with age, with a calm smile on his countenance, slowly marched into the banqueting-hall, and, without the least embarrassment, stood in the presence of the pale and trembling Belshazzar.

What a moment! Here are the thousand lords; the women of the harem, in their extravagant and lascivious attire; here are the festive tables, the unhallowed remains of a royal debauch. The golden vessels of Jehovah's temple still full of the wine of their impure libations. The lamps, amid all the splendor of the palace, still beam upon a thousand countenances on which terror is depicted. The king himself, lately so joyous and so proud, is now trembling, dejected, gasping for breath.

"Art thou that Daniel which art of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my grandfather brought from Jewry? I have even heard of thee that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light, and

understanding, and excellence, is found in thee. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof; but they could not show the interpretation of the thing; and I have heard of thee that thou canst make interpretation and dissolve doubts. Now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Then Daniel answered and said before the king—"Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another. Yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known unto him the interpretation.

"Oh thou king! the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor. All people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne and his glory was taken from him; and he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar! hast not humbled thy heart, though thou

knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified.

"This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE—God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it; TEKEL—Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting; PERES—Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

As soon as Cyrus saw that the ditches, "which they had long worked upon, were finished, he began to think seriously upon the execution of his vast design, which as yet he had communicated to no one. He was informed that in the city, on a certain day, a great festival was to be celebrated, and that the Babylonians, on occasions of that solemnity, were accustomed to pass the whole night in drunkenness and debauchery. Of this impious feast we have already spoken. Thus Providence furnished him with as fit an opportunity as he could desire. He therefore posted a part of his troops on that side where the river entered the city, and another part on that side where it went out, and commanded

them to enter the city that very night by marching along the channel of the river as soon as ever they found it fordable. Having given all necessary orders, he exhorted his officers to follow him—that he was under the direction of the gods. In the evening he gave orders to open the great receptacle, or ditches, on both sides of the town, above and below, that the waters of the rivers might run into them. By this means the Euphrates was quickly emptied, and its channel became dry. Then the two before-mentioned bodies of troops, according to their orders, went into the channels, the one commanded by Gobryas and the other by Gadates, and advanced toward each other without meeting with any impediment.

The invisible guide, the God of Israel, who had promised to "open the gates" to Cyrus, made the general negligence and disorder of that notorious night subservient to His design, by leaving open the "gates of brass" which were made to shut up the descents from the quays to the river, and which alone, if they had not been left open, were sufficient to have defeated the whole enterprise.

Thus did these two bodies of troops penetrate into the very heart of the city without any opposition. According to agreement, they met together at the royal palace, surprised the guard, and cut them in pieces. The company, hearing the tumult without, opened the door. The Persian soldiers rushed in. They were met by the king with his sword in hand. He was slain; and hundreds of his drunken associates shared the same fate. Thus terminated the

great banquet of Belshazzar, where the God of Heaven was wickedly blasphemed; and thus terminated the Babylonian empire, after a duration of two hundred and ten years from the first of Nabonassar's reign, who was the founder thereof.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FEELING FOR THE WELFARE OF THEIR COUNTRY.

Immediately after the taking of Babylon, Cyrus ordered a day of public thanksgiving to the gods, for their wonderful favors and their kind interposition; and then having assembled his principal officers, he publicly applauded their courage and prudence, their zeal and attachment to his person, and distributed rewards to his whole army. He also reviewed his forces, which were in a fine spirited condition. He found they consisted of a hundred and twenty thousand horse, two thousand chariots armed with scythes, and six hundred thousand foot.

When Cyrus judged he had sufficiently regulated his affairs at Babylon, he thought proper to take a journey into Persia. In his way thither he went through Media, to visit Darius, to whom he carried many presents, telling him at the same time, that he would find a noble palace at Babylon ready prepared for him whenever he should please to go

thither. After a brief stay in Persia, he returned to Babylon, accompanied by his uncle, where they counselled together a scheme of government for the whole empire.

The fame of Daniel, as one who had served under so many kings in Babylon, and also as one to whom the gods had imparted a miraculous degree of wisdom, was well spread throughout the city and provinces of Babylon; and since his appearance before the king, as the interpreter of the mysterious handwriting on the night of the fatal banquet, his name was held in great reverence by all the dignitaries of that great city, many of whom were present on that ill-fated night.

In a magnificent apartment of the king's palace, in the conquered city of Babylon, sat together, in earnest conversation, Darius, the Mede, and Cyrus, the great hero of Persia.

"Thou well sayest that he is neither a Mede nor a Persian," said Cyrus; "neither is he a Chaldean. He was brought from the land of Judah, a captive, about the commencement of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. From what I can learn of his history, he was soon placed under tutors, and outstripped all his companions, and became a great favorite of the king. He was soon elevated to posts of honor, and, with the exception of short intervals, he has been the first officer in the kingdom for more than three score years. He receives wonderful revelations from the gods, and the fall of Babylon came to pass according to his predictions. Now, uncle, to me it appears far more important to secure the services of

an individual, be he even a foreigner, whose head is filled with wisdom, and his heart with charity, than to place far inferior personages to fill important offices, because they are Medes or Persians. We have many wise men among us; but among this people, whose manners and customs are so different from our own, I fear we have none that can rule with that profound wisdom as has always marked the course of this Hebrew sage. His vast experience in the affairs of government, fully prepares him for the highest office within our gift. Far be it from me to think of instructing my ever wise uncle in the affairs of his kingdom; but for many reasons I feel a peculiar interest in this aged Hebrew, and of all the persons within my knowledge, I consider him by far the safest man to appoint as the Chief President."

"In this most surely the illustrious son of my brother shall be gratified," replied the Median, with a pleasant smile. "But why may we not have a short interview with this wonderful man, who appears to have more the attributes of a god than a mortal? Wouldst thou not be pleased to see him?"

"Well pleased."

"Then I shall send for him without delay."

A distinguished messenger was, therefore, hurried to the house of the ex-Prime Minister of the Babylonian empire, desiring him to attend in the presence of the King of the Medes, and the great conqueror from Persia.

The Hebrew soon made his appearance, and such was the calm dignity of his whole bearing, as he

slowly walked into the presence of his superiors, that both the Mede and the Persian unconsciously found themselves on their feet to receive him.

"Our distinguished friend has readily complied with our request," said the Persian, beckoning Daniel to a seat on his right.

"Throughout the days of my pilgrimage it has been my great pleasure to render strict obedience to the will of my superiors in all things consistent with the law of my God."

"Then thou considerest the law of thy God as having stronger claims on thy obedience than the laws of thy king?"

"The law of Jehovah is supreme! By that law my life has been shaped for these eight score and four years; and now, at its close, it is surely my joy and consolation."

"Precious sentiments from a noble Hebrew!" cried Cyrus, with feeling. "And how long hast thou been a resident of Babylon?"

"Three score and six years have passed away, since thy servant bade adieu to his native hills in the land of Judah, and came to this great city of Babylon. The companions of my early days have mostly passed away, and soon thy servant shall follow them."

"I trust that such a life shall be precious in the sight of the gods for many years yet to come. Such is thy deep experience in the affairs of State, that we have purposed in our hearts to appoint thee First President of the provinces. Is Belteshazzar willing

to serve the king in this capacity, and shed honor upon the joint reign of the Medes and Persians?"

"My life, for the short period I may tarry among mortals, if ye consider me worthy, will be consecrated to your service."

"Then, O Belteshazzar," answered Darius, "thou art, by our united power and authority, appointed chief of the presidents. We have taken some pains to inquire into thy history, and we can assure thee, that we have full confidence in thy wisdom and integrity. Thy two companions are not as yet appointed; but I trust, we shall find men that shall be worthy of thy confidence. Thine is a responsible trust. We desire to lay no burden on thy shoulders that thou art not able to bear. We consider well thine age, and give thee full authority to procure all the assistance that thou seest fit; but let the oversight be purely thine. We have been well pleased with this interview, and now we desire to trespass no longer on thy time; thou art, therefore, released. May the gods be thy support!"

The minister, in humble reverence, left the presence of the royal dignitaries, and slowly directed his footsteps towards his own mansion.

"The praises of this man have not yet reached his real merits, Cyrus."

"Thou well sayest. There is a striking pecularity in all his movements that convinces the beholder that he is one among ten thousand."

"Thy stay in Babylon must be of short duration. Thou art soon off for the wars. I also must soon return to Media; therefore, this appointing of the

presidents must be attended to without delay. On thee, I pray, let this business rest; and whosoever, in thy wisdom, thou shalt appoint, be assured the appointment shall receive my cordial approbation."

"In this I will strive to do the will of my kind uncle. I will call together my council, and the thing shall soon be accomplished."

* * * * *

In the mansion of one of the presidents, in a delightful part of the city of Babylon, sat together two men in deep and earnest conversation. One of these, whose name was Kinggron, was the owner of the superb mansion. The other, whose name was Fraggood, was his fellow president, under Daniel. On some point of great moment they appeared to be well agreed; while envy, mingled with anger, rested on each countenance.

"The king will soon be again in Babylon," said Kinggron, "and there is no time to be lost. Whatever measure we resort to in order to replace this old Hebrew, whose eye is upon us continually, must be attended to without delay; for the king's stay among us will be of short duration."

"As soon as our companions come, I trust we shall be able to contrive some measure that will remove this ever-watchful old Israelite far out of our way. Does it not ill become the wisdom of Cyrus the Persian, to place over our heads this exacting old stranger, who is neither a Persian, Mede, or even a Chaldean, but a *Hebrew;* brought to the country as a captive of war—and behold, surely, he stands next to the king! One year has gone. We have borne

our grief in painful silence. The time for action has arrived—he *must* be removed. Our combined wisdom must be brought to bear on this one point, and no rest must we find until it is fully accomplished."

"But why come not our comrades? The hour appointed hath already passed. They never dis—"

The door opened, and four persons silently walked into the apartment. They were of middle age, and appeared to be on familiar terms with the two presidents. They were all Medes, and each appeared to be one of the princes of the provinces; and it was soon evident that with the two superior officers they were favorites.

"At last ye have arrived," said Kinggron; "why have ye so long delayed your coming?"

"We are late, my lord," answered Bimbokrak, "I was unexpectedly called to perform an item of business which I could not well lay aside; and my fellows here, waited, to accompany me to your presence. Now we are together, and stand ready to do your pleasure, to the very utmost of our capacities."

"To you the object of our coming together is well known. It is on business that concerns you deeply; and bears with weight on your future destinies, as well as the well-being of those over whom ye are called to preside. We might have easily called together a larger number of princes, to deliberate on this measure, which is nearly connected with the welfare of our beloved country. But having a knowledge of the depth of *your* understanding in matters of state, and the warmth of your love for the welfare

of your beloved country, we thought it advisable to limit the number to four. Like ourselves, for these thirteen months, ye have been under the scrutinizing, envious gaze of this old Hebrew, who has been appointed by the king as our great superior. Indeed, we find ourselves in no better condition, than well-fed *slaves*. What availeth to us the dignity of our offices, as long as we are under the necessity to move at the bidding of this overbearing old man, who, for a long series of years, has been petted and spoiled at the tables of the Kings of Chaldea? Now, over Medes and Persians, he assumes the same daring despotism as marked his long history among the Babylonians. To this, shall we submit? Nay, never! He must be disposed of to our entire satisfaction, and his place filled by a worthier man. In assisting us in this praiseworthy undertaking, ye not only confer a favor on yourselves, but it will be a blessing to all the provinces. We, therefore, have full confidence, that in this, ye will heartily co-operate, and by your ingenuity, and by your keen powers of discernment, assist your superiors in bringing forward measures that will rid the presidents of a superior tyrant, and the country of a superior curse. Are ye ready?"

"Ready, O most excellent Kinggron!" replied the four princes.

"Let it be well understood," continued the president, "that this Daniel is greatly in the favor of Cyrus; and, moreover, that he stands high in the estimation of the king. Of Cyrus we have no present fear, seeing he is out in the wars. This is well;

for before *him*, we would not dare to complain. The king is in possession of far less power of discernment than he, and with him, I trust, we must be successful."

"But," answered Bimbokrak, "we must have some cause—something specific to offer as a ground of complaint against him before the king, or the movement will utterly fail, and prove disastrous to ourselves."

"Thou art right, my good friend," answered the president; "perfectly right. There must be a ground of complaint; and I trust we shall be able to find it. We *must* find it. We have taken the work in hand, and it must not be abandoned."

"Yea," answered Fraggood, "and for this very purpose have Kinggron and myself concluded to admit you into our secret council. In this, we have given you the most infallible proof of our confidence in your skill; and if, by your timely assistance, and strict secrecy, we prove successful, be assured that gold in abundance shall flow to your individual purses. Indeed, for these many months we have been sorrowful on your account, knowing well that your wages are far below the dignity of your high stations. But while we have sorrowed in silence in your behalf, what could we do as long as this exacting Hebrew had his evil gaze fixed upon us continually?"

"By the gods!" cried Bimbokrak, greatly animated, "be assured, most excellent Fraggood, that we are ready to face any emergency in the pursuit of such a praiseworthy task."

"Is this the mind and firm purpose of thy comrades?" asked Kinggron, gazing intently on the countenances of the other three.

"This is our mind and firm purpose," was the ready reply.

"Then, indeed, are we fully prepared for business," replied Kinggron.

"It is evident to us all," said Fraggood, "that *our* cause of grievance with this man, would not be considered as such by the king. Indeed, he would think the more favorable of him, and pronounce it 'commendable vigilance over the pecuniary interests of the kingdom;' we must, therefore, find in him something that will prove displeasing to the king. *Our* great object is his removal from office; and it matters not with us, what the nature of the offence may be. It must be admitted, from the very nature of the case in hand, that we labor under a peculiar disadvantage; seeing that in all his movements this Hebrew studies to please the king; but these barriers, I trust, are not proof against the profound skill of this body of men."

"First of all, then," said Kinggron, "I would ask if any one present is knowing to anything in the conduct of this Daniel, that by any contrivance could be construed to his disadvantage before the king?"

To this question there was no ready reply; and for a minute a very painful silence ensued. At last, Bimbokrak opened his mouth in speech:

"Can it be possible that this man's great care for the money interest of the nation flows from his pure regard for the king? Is there not a selfish interest

at the bottom of all this? There must be. It cannot well be otherwise: and if we had but the means of access to his account books, I am well satisfied that we could clearly trace thousands of gold and silver to his own private coffers, and not to the treasury of the nation. This man is reported among his own countrymen, who are captives in our midst, as a man full of benevolence and liberality. They say that his beneficence of late is unbounded, and this they say not without reason. From whence flow the means of his liberality? Let this be looked into, and be assured, that we shall be able to show clearly to the king, that a large sum of the nation's money is lavished by this old Hebrew on the poor and needy among the captives of Judah."

"If such an accusation could be proved against him," answered Fraggood, "we could ask for nothing better. I have my fears that in this we cannot succeed. Howbeit, this is a point on which I have bestowed but little thought; and on looking at the matter seriously, the suspicions of my good friend Bimbokrak do not appear to be without foundation. We can easily form a pretext that will bring the books into our possession; we can give them a thorough investigation, and if they are not correct, our object is secured."

"Let that be marked down as *one* item of investigation," said Kinggron. "But what other means are within our reach for the accomplishment of our whole purpose?"

"Many!" promptly answered Scramgee, another of the four princes. "In the first place, to you, my

worthy superiors, who have condescended to ask my opinion, I would humbly recommend, that in your conversation with the First President, ye make it your particular aim to impress it upon his mind that ye are his warmest friends, and that all his movements are peculiarly pleasing in your sight. In this, surely, ye will succeed. When ye have thus secured his confidence, he will be communicative. Hang with pleasure on his lips. Encourage his sentiments. For information, ask him to give you a brief history of the Kings of Babylon, and their mode of carrying on the government. Compare *their* mode with *ours*, and ask his preference. Remember he was a particular friend of the great Nebuchadnezzar. If ye think it safe, venture to ask his opinion in regard to the relative merits of Darius and the great King of Babylon. Mark ye well his answers. Having full confidence in your friendship and sincerity, he may, peradventure, find fault with some measures of our own government, and give his decided preference to the King of Babylon, in point of power and wisdom. This, conveyed to the ears of the king in your own impressive manner, would at once settle the point, and hurl the proud old Israelite from an office which he never ought to have filled."

"Well thought of, surely," replied Fraggood; "and thou hast given me additional proof of thy great wisdom and power of mind."

"And, moreover," continued Scramgee, encouraged by the flattering compliment of his superior, "let us all, between this and our next meeting, be on our watch, to avail ourselves of every information

in regard to the movements of this Daniel: then let each one report, and putting all things together, can we fail of reaching a happy result?"

"Scramgee!" said President Kinggron, in an animated voice, as he rose and began to pace the length of the apartment, "I find that my highest expectations in regard to the quickness of thine understanding, are far more than realized."

"Our coming together has been profitable," said Fraggood; "we are greatly encouraged. Before we meet again, President Kinggron and myself will give the books a thorough examination, and endeavor, by all the ingenuity we can master, to draw from the old Hebrew language that will be offensive to the delicate ears of Darius the Mede."

"When and where shall be the place of our next gathering?" asked Bimbokrak.

"In one week from this night, for the greater convenience of our four worthy friends, we meet again at the *Castle Garden*. In order to be secure, we shall meet at a late hour. Fail not to be present at the place appointed."

"Thy servants will be ever happy to obey the commands of their worthy superiors," answered Prince Scramgee; and the four princes bowed themselves out of the apartment.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CASTLE GARDEN ON THE EUPHRATES.

Soon after the private interview mentioned in the last chapter, the tall, bending form of Fraggood, was seen hastening toward the office of the Hebrew president. On his countenance might have been read, deep seated malice, and a full purpose of revenge. But ever and anon, that expression would disappear, and give way to that of pleasantness; and a bland smile would play on those thin lips, and the fierceness of the eye would give way to serenity. This was the preparatory practice, and a part of those deceitful performances to be enacted in the presence of the man of God, for the purpose of his overthrow. Before he was aware he found himself by the door of the Prime Minister's rooms. He knocked and was admitted with due respect.

"And is my worthy friend the President, at his dwelling on this bright and beautiful morning?"

"My worthy master is in another apartment," replied a young man of fine appearance, who appeared to be connected with the business department of the office.

"It is my pleasure to be conducted into his presence."

The young man led the way, and Fraggood, with a countenance clothed with smiles, and a heart overflowing with malice, was conducted into the presence of Daniel, the chief of the presidents.

"I humbly beg my lord's forgiveness," said Fraggood, with his best smile, "I fear I have been guilty of disturbing a business interview of importance. I had the impression that my lord the president was alone, and therefore I made bold to come into his apartment."

"An apology of this kind is not asked from President Fraggood," said Daniel. "Thou art always welcome to my presence. I am not particularly engaged on any business. This is my good friend Apgomer, an old inhabitant of Babylon, and one of the choice of my youthful days."

"And peradventure one of thine own nation."

"Nay, my friend is a pure native Chaldean, as were his parents before him."

"Then ye have together witnessed the grandeur and glory of the Kings of Babylon, whose fame went through all the earth. In my boyhood days, I well remember that the name of Nebuchadnezzar fell on my ear as the name of one of the gods. I have often since coveted the opportunity of conversing about this great monarch, with some one who had seen him in the palmiest days of his glory."

"And such an opportunity thou hast at last found," replied Daniel smiling; "for the man does not dwell on the face of the whole earth, that knows more of the personal history of that king than thy

servant. For thirty and eight long years I was honored with a place in his court, and shared much of his personal friendship."

"And if I have been rightly informed, he always evinced strong attachment to his friends. Was this so?"

"This was surely so; but not to a greater degree than in the generality of men. We are all inclined to place greater value on those whom we have proved to be our friends, than on those of whose real friendship we have had no satisfactory proof."

"Thou well sayest my noble friend; and if the king of Babylon saw fit to bestow on thee some peculiar marks of his regard, it was but an additional proof of the wisdom of his head, as well as the generosity of his heart."

"The King of Babylon surely in regard to the government of his then vast empire, manifested strong marks of superior wisdom; but like all other mortals, he often erred, and committed many sad blunders."

"This is all true. But upon the whole, have we not strong reasons to pronounce Nebuchadnezzar the most ingenious of all kings?"

"This is abundantly true as far as the kings of Babylon are concerned; of other kings I am not prepared to speak. If my worthy friend Fraggood, having a clear knowledge of the kings of Media and Persia, is prepared to pronounce them inferior to the king of Babylon, he is at liberty so to do."

"May the gods forbid that thy servant should utter such a word!" said Fraggood, somewhat

alarmed in witnessing the penetrating gaze of the aged Hebrew. "I innocently spoke of the great wisdom of one, who had proved himself such a warm friend to my lord the First President."

"It was under Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, that our Temple in Judah was destroyed, and our nation reduced and led captive into Chaldea; and while as an individual, I received much kindness from the king, I was not blind to his daring acts of transgression against the law of Jehovah."

"Thou speakest of thy captive countrymen. I have often of late thought of them with feelings of painful emotions. I fear that many of them are in indigent circumstances. Now in a nation like ours, these things ought not so to be. Gold and silver in abundance, from every clime flow to our already rich treasuries. And to what better use can they be applied, than to assuage the misery and ease the circumstances of this noted nation in our midst? Thou standest at the helm of affairs; and anything that thou doest must be well pleasing in the sight of the king. Why not therefore direct a certain yearly sum for the special benefit of this worthy people, who are too much forgotten among us? In this measure thou wilt secure the warm co-operation of thine unworthy servant and his companion, who as well as myself is deeply alive to the neglected condition of the Hebrew people."

"My friend Fraggood will please accept the thanks of the First President, for the warmth of his regards for my beloved people. I am not aware that *as a class* they are in needy circumstances. There

may be many individual cases of want, and as far as these come to my knowledge, I am not slow to relieve them—not from the treasury of the kingdom, but from my own private means. Such a step as is recommended by thee in the warmth of thy liberality, can never meet my approbation unless first proposed by the king."

"I fear our excellent Chief President is over cautious; but this is a matter I would not urge. I have prolonged my stay beyond my expectation. My chief object in seeking thy presence at this time, is, to ask another favor. We have heard much of the superiority of the Chaldeans in the science of figures, and in their form of book-keeping: and as no one in Babylon stands equal in this department to our worthy First President, we have ventured to ask of him a permission to glance at his books, and thereby become acquainted with the superior manner of the Chaldeans in keeping their accounts. If yours is a more excellent way, it will be for the benefit of the nation for it to become universal. We shall retain the books but for a short time, and return them in safety."

"The books are at the disposal of my friends the presidents, whenever they choose to see them. Take as many as thou seest fit, and return them to suit thy convenience."

"Thou art ever kind. I shall now return and without delay a servant shall come and convey the books to my habitation. May the gods be the sure support of our most excellent First President." And

Fraggood left the apartment, darted into the street, and hurried homeward.

"May the gods curse him!" muttered the foiled conspirator with clenched teeth. "He appears to be beyond my reach. Did he suspect? Impossible! But they say he holds intercourse with the gods, and is a discerner of spirits. Be it so—gods or no gods, I swear by all the invisible powers, he shall yet be humbled! From the books I derive but very little hope. Alter them? Ah! but that experiment would be too dangerous. Nay, that must not be resorted to. Well, if we fail in one point of attack, we will direct our operations to another. The fortress is strong, but by the gods, it *shall* be taken."

"What thinketh my good friend, Apgomer, of the manner and spirit of President Fraggood?" asked Daniel, sweetly smiling on his old friend.

"If President Fraggood's heart is not greatly at variance with his tongue, he must be one of the kindest of men. But it is not always the case, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

"Thy suspicions, Apgomer, are well founded. That man's heart is filled with deadly malice and envy. With his companion he endeavors, with all his malicious powers, to find something either in my words or actions that can be construed into an offence against the king. But I fear not their malice. Even if they succeed, the God of Israel, as in days of yore, will defend his servant, and the higher law shall be triumphant."

"Daniel, the servant of the living God, shall not be harmed!" said the aged Apgomer, wiping away a tear. "Out of every trouble Jehovah shall deliver him, and clothe his enemies with shame."

Now the young man before-mentioned entered the apartment, and said that a servant from President Fraggood was present, desiring certain parchments, of which his master had made mention.

Daniel gave orders to deliver them over to the servant; and the young man left the apartment.

"And yet," said Apgomer, "with all their hatred and malice, they wish to imitate thee, and be benefited by thy superior skill, as a recorder of accounts."

"The books, my good friend, are sought, not as patterns to follow, but to be examined in the malicious hope of finding mistakes."

"O, the deep wickedness of their hearts!" cried Apgomer, with much feeling. "But it will be a vain search!"

"I carefully examined all the books, and I found all things correct; and from that I have no fears."

"Well, my good friend, I must slowly return towards home. I have tarried long. I shall hope to see thee again not many days hence. Come oft and see thy old servant. Thou wilt generally find me at home; occasionally I go and spend a few days with one of my young friends, who is the keeper of the Castle Garden. Adieu, dear Daniel, and may Jehovah be thy wisdom!" and the ever faithful friend of the Hebrew president bent his

shortened footsteps towards the house of his son, a man of vast wealth, and much weight of character.

On that night at the house of Kinggron the books were thoroughly examined. Parchment after parchment was unrolled, and eyes, sharpened with malice, carefully scrutinized every line; but all to no purpose. The parchments in perfect accuracy were entirely beyond the cruel range of their malignant criticism. The papers were rolled up at a late hour, and the two conspirators for a while sat in sullen silence.

"Hitherto the gods do not appear to favor us, Kinggron," said Fraggood. "Let us not be dismayed, my noble friend; we have sworn vengeance on the head of the old Hebrew; it may be a difficult undertaking, but nothing can prevent it, or turn us aside from our settled purpose. Our next consultation at the Castle Garden will, I trust, bring about the desired result."

"My excellent friend Fraggood, is ever courageous; give me thy hand! Again we renew our solemn vow! Here, in the presence of the gods, we swear vengeance on the murderer of our liberties and the destroyer of our rights!"

"But, my good friend, the night is far gone, and we must part," said Fraggood. "At the appointed hour we meet again at the garden of the Castle," and the president hastened from the house of his friend Kinggron, and in the dead of the night pursued his way towards his own mansion.

The Castle Garden was on what we might term a small artificial island, built in the channel of the

Euphrates, in one of the most beautiful parts of the city. The inclosures were surrounded with high walls, built in solid masonry, something in the form of a castle, by which name it was usually called. Within was one of the most delightful gardens or public grounds within the city. On the walls inside there was a number of galleries, highly decorated; and on the walls outside, there were appropriate places for the inhabitants to promenade, and have a clear view of many parts of the city. From the quays, on either side of the river, there were bridges leading to each grand entrance. Over this inclosure there was a temporary roof, which, by an ingenious machinery, could be removed or put on at pleasure; thus advantageous to meet the contingencies of the season and of the weather.

The night was calm and beautiful. The bright, full orb of night poured its silvery rays on the bosom of the deep flowing Euphrates; and those inclosures were thronged with thousands of merry hearts, who had gone thither to enjoy the enraptured beauties of the moonlight scenes. But the happy hours had quickly fled. The last couple of the merry throng had left, and the moonbeams fell on the perfect stillness of the Castle Garden. One solitary being yet walketh amid its deserted bowers. He often tarries in the family of the garden keeper for a few days, and enjoys himself much amid the fascinating charms of the inclosures. After the throng had dispersed, this aged Chaldean left his little chamber, and stepped into the garden, to enjoy the pleasurable emotions of that bright night.

The faithful keeper was about to close the massive portals, when behold six men walked up, with their faces partly hid, stood before him, and desired admittance.

"And who are ye," sternly demanded the sentinel, "that ye should be admitted at this late hour? Ye shall not be admitted. Back to your lodgings without delay, or your unwarrantable demand shall be made known to the authorities!"

"Thou art a brave fellow, and an honor to thy post, and thou shalt be rewarded!" whispered Fraggood; "but let not thy voice be elevated! Look thou here!" And he here uncovered his countenance. "Thou standest in the presence of two of the chief presidents, who are accompanied by four of the princes of the provinces."

"I humbly beg the forgiveness of my lords the presidents!" cried the keeper. "Surely I had no"——

"Thou art guilty of no crime," interrupted Fraggood. "Thou hast proved thyself a worthy man. The night is sultry, and the moonbeams so clear and bright, that we concluded to enter the garden for an hour, and there, together, enjoy its beautiful sceneries."

"Thy servant," replied the keeper, "thinks himself at this time highly honored."

The six conspirators entered the garden.

"Follow in this direction," said Kinggron, "and let us be sure that we are far enough from the ears of mortals."

"The garden is truly enchanting!" said Bimbokrak.

"True, but I trust we have no spare thoughts to bestow on that point," said Fraggood, in a tone that was somewhat indicative of reproof.

"Lo! here is a secure place," said Kinggron, pointing to an enclosed bower near at hand. "Let us here be seated, and let us in earnest attend to the important business that called us thus together."

In obedience to the dictation of Kinggron, the company was seated, and President Fraggood began:

"According to appointment we thus assemble at the Castle Garden. Many have assembled in this place on other occasions, and many have been the important subjects brought forward in this place for mature deliberation: but never before has there been an item of business of such weight, and of such vast consequences to the nation. Since our last meeting, all of us have labored with untiring energies for the speedy accomplishment of our grand design, which is so full of hope to our beloved country. What passed between us on the night of our last meeting, is yet fresh in our memories. Since then, we have used every means within our power for the furtherance of this worthy measure, that is of such immense importance to the future welfare of the United Provinces. In conformity with the ingenious advice of our worthy friend Bimbokrak, now present, I sought and found an interview with our common foe, the old Israelite. From the nature of our conversation, I was at first led to hope, that something

might escape his lips that would answer well our purpose. In this, however, I was disappointed. As far as my own safety would permit (and once indeed a little farther), I interrogated him in regard to Nebuchadnezzar, and the greatness of his empire; but his answers were such as to throw all the responsibility on myself. The books were procured, and with deep vigilance and care, they have been thoroughly examined: but as I previously feared, they are all astonishingly correct. Thus, hitherto, as far as my knowledge extends, our efforts have proved a failure. But let it not be supposed from this, that the noble undertaking is to be abandoned. Nay! Our failure at one or two points, only serves to make us more confident of success at other points. Our words have gone forth? We have sworn before the gods, and Daniel the Hebrew must be overthrown!"

"In this, my soul heartily uniteth with that of my worthy friend, President Fraggood," answered Kinggron. "The welfare of our beloved nation, and the future comfort of our families, demand of us in language loud, that this old eagle-eyed Hebrew be dragged from his elevated position, and sent forth for the remainder of his envious mortal career, to tread the modest walks of private life. What have our four friends—— Hark! Hush! Heard ye not the sound of footsteps near by?"

The company now listened in breathless silence; but naught was heard, but the solitary barking of a dog in the far distance.

"It was but the workings of thine imagination,

my worthy Kinggron," said Fraggood. "The place is secure; proceed with thy remarks."

"What have our four friends," continued Kinggron, "to divulge or to propose? Such is the confidence I have in your fidelity, that I am not under the necessity to ask you if ye have been on your watch."

"For myself, and these my companions, I am ready to answer," said Bimbokrak. "We have exerted every power, and we have left no available means that we could think of untried; but like unto our worthy superiors, we are under the painful necessity to say, that up to this hour, we have not been able to think of any measure, by which the noble object in view is to be secured. I trust that ere we part from this Castle Garden, we shall be able to contrive a plan that will be all that we can desire."

"Let us hear from Prince Scramgee," said Fraggood, "for his wisdom is these matters is truly great."

"I know of but one measure by which we can ensnare the old Hebrew, and that I know will prove effectual."

"And what can that be?" anxiously inquired Fraggood.

"It is concerning the law of his God."

"Alas, for us!" said Kinggron, "there is no law of the Medes and Persians that forbids the worship of any god; and so that measure must fail."

"I beg my lord the president's forgiveness," said Scramgee, "but thy servant thinketh that it is the

very thing we need. I know we have no law that interrupts the worship of any one. But have my lords the presidents no power to make laws? Let such a law then be enacted to be in force but for a short period."

"And what will be the nature of this new law?" inquired Fraggood.

"In order to put all on an equal footing, to save suspicion, let it be enacted, that no person within the provinces of Babylon, shall offer any prayer to any God or man, save the king only, for thirty days: and in case of a violation, let the guilty one be taken and cast into the lion's den. See ye not that this law pours all homage at the feet of Darius? Be assured my lords, he will not hesitate a moment to give it his signature. Now if this law is enacted, ye readily see, that this Daniel will be the first one to transgress. Think ye that there is any human power that can terrify him from the regular worship of his God? Nay! From what I know of the history and character of this old man, there are not lions enough in all Chaldea, to frighten him from his accustomed prayers."

Such was the effect of this discovery on the minds of the rest of the company, that they all rose to their feet, and surrounded the now triumphant Scramgee.

"The gods have given thee superior wisdom!" cried Fraggood in ecstasies, "the thing is accomplished; and to thy profound skill are we chiefly indebted."

"But," said Kinggron, "let us fortify ourselves

against all possible danger. Now, should the king ask of us what object we have in view, in proposing such a law; and what it is that calls for the enactment of such a peculiar edict, what should be our answer?"

"Our answer would be this," answered President Fraggood. "*The safety of the Union demands it.*" Let the reason be clearly set forth in strong language, as the king is approached: and moreover, let us be careful to approach him while he is in a pleasant mood, for——"

"Hark ye!" whispered Scramgee. "Heard ye not that voice? I fear we are not alone in this garden!"

"We heard no voice!" was the united reply.

"But I did, or my ears play a deceitful part," sternly answered Scramgee.

"But what did the voice resemble?" inquired Fraggood.

"It resembled *another* human groan, or at least a very loud sigh."

"If this is the case, let us make a brief search in the vicinity of the bower," said Bimbokrak.

A search was made, but too late. A door gently closed, and the venerable old Chaldean was safely lodged within his little comfortable apartment.

"The search is vain. Our position is secure. Let us back again to the bower and perfect our work!" said Fraggood. And in compliance with his demand, the unworthy council resumed its business.

"Now comrades," said Fraggood in a restored

pleasantness of voice, "we are again ready for business, and now, it only remains for us to draw this new law into form, and prepare it for the royal signature."

"Let this part of the work be the honorable position of our ever faithful Scramgee," said Kinggron, "and let us meet again at my house to-morrow night, and there complete our arrangements."

"Let it be even so," answered Fraggood. "The time is short; in six days more, and the king leaves Media for Babylon. His stay among us will be short. He must be approached soon after his arrival—but of this, we can converse hereafter. The night is far spent—let us hasten to our dwellings."

The council was broken up; and soon its members were on their way towards their respective places of abode.

Early on the next morning, the venerable form of an aged man was seen moving with hurried footsteps toward the house of the First President. At last he reached the desired spot. He entered, and inquired for Daniel, in a voice that indicated much emotion.

"And why appears my grandfather so unhappy on such a delightful morn?" said the young man.

"The morn is truly refreshing, my son," replied the aged man, "but I am in haste; so let me be conducted into the presence of thy master, without delay."

The young man led the way, and the aged man followed, and was admitted into the presence of the president.

"A happy day to my good friend Apgomer! Thou art out at an early hour."

"I have thus early sought the face of my best friend, as a revealer of a malicious plot, contrived against the First President. Yesterday night was serene and clear; the moon and stars were bright. The Castle Garden was thronged with glad and merry hearts. Such a place became not the aged. But at a late hour, after the throng had dispersed, and while the moon brightly shone in the heavens, as no sleep troubled my eyelids, I thought within myself, that a calm walk through the winding paths of those beautiful enclosures, would be reviving to my spirit. I accordingly left my little apartment, and entered the garden. I had been there not many minutes, before I saw entering at the upper end, six men. They approached the spot on which I stood, conversing together in an undertone. I moved behind a certain thickly enclosed bower, into which they entered, and there I remained, and listened to the contriving of plots for thy overthrow, worthy of the most malignant fiends in the dark regions of Hades. This conspiracy is led by Fraggood and Kinggron, assisted by a number of the princes, among whom are Bimbokrak and Scramgee. This foul movement has been going on for many a day; but until yesterday night, all their efforts seemed unavailing. At last, prince Scramgee brought forward a plan, which met with the cordial approval of the rest. And who but the chief evil spirit of the universe, could have put in his evil heart such a horrible measure? It is to this effect—a law is to

be enacted, forbidding any man, woman, or child to offer any prayer or petition, to any god or man, save the king only, for the space of thirty days; and whosoever shall violate this law, shall be taken and cast into the lion's den. Thou seest therefore, O my best friend, the snare they have laid for thy feet. And what shalt thou do in this hour of trial?"

"Let them proceed in their scheme of wickedness. Let it become ripe. The God in whom I trust, shall vindicate the honor and superiority of his own law. I might easily frustrate all their malicious designs, by acquainting the king with their cowardly plots: but the cause of Jehovah shall gather more strength from a miraculous display of His power, in the preservation of his servant from harm. Forty years ago, idolatry in Chaldea received a blow, from the effects of which it has never recovered, in the miraculous deliverance of my three cousins from the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And if a visit to the lions for a few hours, may cause the name of Jehovah to be feared, I ask for no greater honor. No weapon formed against the servant of Jehovah shall prosper. Let not my good friend Apgomer be troubled. The life of Daniel is as safe in the lions' den, as among his friends at his own home. Therefore let them proceed with their malicious measures; let no impediment be thrown in their way. Let them have a few days of rejoicing, and their brief nights of merriment. Soon the day of retribution shall overtake them: for He that is higher than the highest

shall surely avenge himself on these workers of iniquity."

"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!" said Apgomer, wiping away the falling tears. "Thy refuge is the Lord Jehovah, and he will not suffer thy foot to be moved. He that keepeth Israel shall not slumber."

"Nevertheless," answered Daniel, "thou hast done well to inform me of their wicked devices. I shall better know how to proceed. For the time being, let them have the full desire of their hearts. The king, not knowing their dark intentions, in an evil hour may give his signature to the writing. Let it be even so. The decisive hour will reveal to the astonished thousands, that there is a God in Israel."

"Let Jehovah's name be praised!" exclaimed Apgomer, "for the strength He imparteth unto His servant. And now having accomplished my errand, I shall slowly return to mingle in the society of my children, and there my morning and evening prayers shall ascend to Jehovah, imploring His blessing on His servant Daniel; and that all his enemies may be confounded."

"Let not our knowledge of this matter be revealed to any one;" said Daniel, "and the God in whom we trust, in His infinite wisdom, will direct the whole to His own glory."

"Adieu, my kind friend! soon we shall meet in that quiet country, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE "UNION SAFETY COMMITTEE" ON GUARD.

AGAIN the great city of Babylon was all excitement, and expectation was raised to its highest pitch. The long expected day had at last arrived, and the grand entry of Darius the Mede was momentarily expected, by an enthusiastic and curious throng. By the Babylonians generally, their new king was regarded in a favorable light. Such had been the profligacy and tyranny of their late kings, that any change was hailed with gratitude; and, moreover, the mildness of Darius toward them on a previous visitation, when accompanied by Cyrus the Persian, had greatly won their regards and affections. Thousands of the people had gone without the walls to meet him, and tens of thousands were seen thronging the public grounds in the vicinity of the royal palaces. At last the monarch's triumphal train appeared in the distance, the shining spears and bright armor of his guard, glittering in the clear sunbeams. Nearer and nearer they approached, and entered the city; and amid enthusiastic shouts, the monarch was escorted to the royal palace.

Darius the Mede was far from being a man of

stern moral worth, and true decision of character. He was rather weak in mind, and easily flattered. Nevertheless, he was a man of tender feelings, and cruelty was no part of his nature. He was greatly elated with the warm reception he received at the hands of the Babylonians, and now or never was the time for the foul conspirators to try their power with the king.

The two presidents, accompanied by the four princes, soon made their appearance in the presence of the king.

"Welcome into the presence of your sovereign!" said the king in a very pleasant mood. "Let the full desires of your hearts be made known to the king, and with pleasure he will grant your every wish."

"O king, live forever!" replied President Fraggood. "Thou art a mighty ruler. Thy dominions are unbounded. Thy rich possessions are found in every clime. The name of Darius falls on the ears of the kings of the earth, and they tremble. In thy wisdom, thou hast set over the provinces of Babylon an hundred and twenty princes, and over these thou hast set three presidents, the first of whom is Daniel, a man mighty in wisdom and understanding. Now, O king, thou knowest, that these provinces are united, and may the gods forbid that anything should ever transpire to dissolve this glorious Union. Thy servants have some reason to fear that among some of the inhabitants of these *Northern* provinces, there is a disposition to think, that the commands of the king are not absolute; and that in

certain cases they may be disregarded. Far be it from us to think that this feeling prevails to any serious extent. We are happy to know, that in all the *Southern* provinces they are abundantly loyal; and indeed in the Northern provinces this rebellious and dangerous disposition is confined to a few mischievous fanatics; but it is a poisonous plant, O king, that must be destroyed in the bud. If such looseness is permitted to go unpunished, how long will it be before our beloved Union is shivered to ruined fragments? We have had this subject under our most serious consideration. We have thought over it, with throbbing hearts. Some measure must be resorted to that will impress the inhabitants with the matchless greatness of our king, and convince them that when he commands he intends to be obeyed. Therefore O king, with nothing but the good of the nation at heart, thy servants the three presidents, with all the princes, have enacted this law, and it is now presented to thee for thy royal signature and seal:

"'It is hereby enacted, *for the safety of the Union:* Let no person offer any prayer or petition, to any God or man, except the king, for the space of thirty days; and whosoever shall violate this decree, shall be taken and thrown into the den of lions.

"'Given under my hand, at the city of Babylon, on this twelfth day of the ninth month, and sealed with the seal of the Medes and Persians, which changeth not.'"

"In this, surely, there is nothing unreasonable,"

said the easily flattered king; "my wise presidents and faithful princes could never propose and advocate a measure that was not highly beneficial in its results. That which has any tendency to weaken the glorious bond of our Union must be put down, and the safety of the United Provinces must be placed on an immovable basis. If, in your superior wisdom, ye have judged that this law is called for, may the gods forbid that I should refuse to give it countenance."

"The measure shall be hailed with universal joy, O king, among all thy loyal subjects; and let those who dare disobey, suffer the awful consequence. From this day the name of Darius the Mede, shall be a terror to every evil-doer, and all his enemies shall be put to shame."

"Let the king have the writing."

The writing was delivered over to the monarch by a hand that trembled with excitement

"It is surely a peculiar enactment," said the king, as he took the pen in his hand. "I fail to see its strong points, but at this stage of my reign, I am not prepared to oppose a measure that is the offspring of the combined wisdom of the realm. If my Persian nephew were present, I would deem it advisable to have his opinion; but as he is out in the wars, I cannot avail myself of that."

So the king's name was given to the fatal parchment; and, moreover, it was sealed with the seal of the Medes and Persians.

"The thing is done," said Darius; "is there anything more that ye wish to communicate to the king?

Remember that I am always well pleased to commune with my friends."

"Thy goodness is ever abundant, O king," answered Fraggood; "this is all that we have to present this day. Will the king accept our united gratitude for the kind manner in which we have been received into the presence of the mightiest monarch that ever swayed a sceptre. Long live our matchless king! We shall no longer trespass on thy time. We return to our respective stations, to carry out the pleasure of our king."

The conspirators, with bounding hearts, made their way in haste, and entered the house of President Fraggood, and there gave vent to the fiendish joy of their malicious hearts, at the success of their nefarious scheme.

"Now we must be on the watch," said Kinggron, "or he will, after all, escape. Let three of our number be appointed, and let them be called *The Union Safety Committee;* whose business it shall be to mark well the movements of the old Hebrew, and prepare for all emergencies, ready answers for the ears of the king."

"Thou hast well thought," answered Fraggood, "for I apprehend that as yet we are not quite out of danger. I fear this measure will be repulsive to the king, when he thinketh of it in all its parts; and more repulsive still, when he finds the first transgressor to be none other than the First President. Let us be prepared for the mighty contest! This is a movement that will justify desperate measures. Things must be resorted to, that in other matters

would be justly condemned. The grand object in view must justify our every step. Our words have gone forth to the king, that this law is the fruit of the calm deliberations of *all* the presidents. Now, in regard to the future of this matter, there must be no cowardly apologies, no lame explanations, no faltering embarrassment, nor weak equivocation. Let us still unitedly adhere to every statement that we have made. And shall the testimony of one be strong enough to impeach the testimony of six men? Nay, verily! Let us, therefore, be firm, and we shall not only succeed in condemning the old Israelite, but also prove him a liar. Are we now ready to swear solemnly, in the presence of the gods, that our testimonies, if called before the king, shall say that this Daniel was concerned in framing this law?"

"All ready, most noble Fraggood," was the united reply.

"Then we swear!"

The next day, by order of the presidents, the streets of Babylon rang with the proclamation of the new law. Heralds were sent to and fro, who, at the top of their voices, sounded the peculiar edict throughout every thoroughfare. At first, it was thought by many to be a mischievous hoax; but it was soon found to be stern reality. Nothing could exceed the astonishment and consternation produced among the inhabitants when they first heard it: it was so unlike anything they could expect from the mild Mede. Not only among the Hebrews, who were numerous in the city, was this singular law looked upon as monstrous in its nature, but also by

the great body of Chaldeans, many of whom were warmly attached to the worship of their gods. The shortness of the period in which it was to be enforced, however, served to quiet them in a manner. Thirty days would soon be over, and then they would closely watch the future movements of their new king, in whom they had already been disappointed.

The "Union Safety Committee" acted well their part. Daniel, perfectly acquainted with all their movements, gave himself no uneasiness. With full confidence in his God, he rolled his burden upon Jehovah; and felt the perfect assurance that all would be well.

To Fraggood and Kinggron, the devotional hours of the First President were well known; and at such hour, it was necessary that they should, under some pretence, find their way into his worshipping chamber. To find such an excuse was but the work of a moment, to those so expert in mischievous plots as the two presidents.

Now, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, when the loud voices of the heralds proclaiming the peculiar enactment, fell on his ears, he laid by his parchment, closed his eyes for a moment in silent devotion, then rose, and calmly entered that little chamber, where he had so often, for so many years, bowed before the God of his fathers. There he had held so much sweet communion with Jehovah! There he had so often poured his complaints into the ears of the God of Israel! There he had sat for many hours in silent meditation on the length of

Judah's captivity, and cried "How long, O Lord, how long!" A dear spot to the man of God that little chamber had been for many a long year.

"From the days of my childhood I have prayed to the God of my fathers," soliloquized Daniel; "I well remember, when by the side of my mother, when I was yet but a little child, I bowed the knee in humble adoration to my God. From that day to this, throughout my long, weary pilgrimage, I have always prayed and offered my petitions to the Most High. And am I now to be frightened in my old age, from the worship of my God through the fear of the lions? Is this the strength of Daniel's faith? I laugh to scorn their blasphemous law! Lions or no lions, Daniel must pray; and the solemn hour has arrived."

The aged prophet rises, and slowly moves toward an open window, and reverently falls on his knees before the great Sovereign of the universe.

Soon after Daniel had left for his devotional exercises, the members of the "Union Safety Committee" (Fraggood, Bimbokrak, and Scramgee) were seen on their way from the house of Kinggron, moving in the direction of the house of the First President.

"If we find him in prayer before his God," said Fraggood, "we shall not be called upon to offer any excuse for our calling. We will ask forgiveness for the intrusion, and retire. But if we find him otherwise, our object seems reasonable, indeed."

"May the gods grant that we need not speak of our object," said Bimbokrak, with some trembling of voice.

By this time the "committee" had arrived at the door of the First President's mansion. Fraggood led the way, and was received by the young man mentioned in another place, who was well aware of their object.

"We have business of importance with thy master," said Fraggood. "Wilt thou do us the *favor* of conducting us into his presence?"

"*Favor!*" said the young man, with a curl of the lip. "My lord the president is not aware, perhaps, that we have a law that forbids asking any *favors* except at the hands of the king. If I have any *favors* to show the president, I pray thee let them be bestowed *unasked*. We cannot well afford as yet to make a present of President Fraggood to the lions. My worthy master is in one of his apartments, and my lord the president may make bold to find him; but, I pray thee, ask no *favors* in this house for at least thirty days, or we may report thee to the king."

This bold, unexpected answer from a young man, who had always hitherto appeared as a beautiful specimen of modesty, and an embodiment of true politeness, greatly astonished the chairman of the "committee." And, moreover, he found that he had actually violated the new law by asking a *favor*. This was a point on which the worthy dignitary had not bestowed a thought. Now, for the first time, it found its way to the vicinity of his thinking faculties. He stood motionless for a minute, while paleness, partly from anger, and partly from fear, gathered over his countenance.

But this was not the time to rebuke the young man. So Fraggood commanded his companions to follow, and the "committee" went together into the office; but the First President was not there.

"Hark ye!" whispered Fraggood. "Hark!"

"By the gods it is the voice of prayer!" said Bimbokrak.

"Silently! Silently!" answered Scramgee, "or he will surely hear us."

"Follow me!" said the president. "Tread lightly!"

The "committee," with beating hearts, and light footsteps, sought the chamber from whence came the sound of prayer. They soon found the spot; the door was open, and the man of God, on his bended knees, was deeply engaged in solemn devotion.

They gazed upon him for a moment; he saw them not, for his countenance was turned in another direction. Fraggood did not wish to return without acquainting Daniel of his presence, but still he wished to escape an interview. Therefore, in a voice that the First President would surely hear, he said:

"We beg pardon for this intrusion. Let us not disturb our most excellent friend whilst he *makes his petitions* to his God."

The Hebrew prophet gently turned his head, but he saw but the receding forms of the members of the "committee" as they hastened for the street below; and so he continued his supplications to the God of his fathers.

The "Union Safety" men were soon back again at the house of President Kinggron; and great was the demonstration of joy at the hitherto grand success of their malignant plot.

The next morning witnessed again the guilty form of the leading conspirator, with his two accomplices, on their way towards the king's palace. They were admitted, and were soon in the presence of their king.

"And what good thing do the presidents desire of the king?" asked Darius, in rather a surly mood, for the more he thought of their new statute, the more repulsive it appeared in his sight.

"O king, live for ever!" replied Fraggood, with a deceitful smile of deep respect on his countenance. "Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that asketh a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?"

"The thing is true," answered the king, "according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."

"Then it is made our painful duty to inform thee, that Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou has signed; but maketh his petition three times a day."

"*Daniel!*" replied the king; "I know of no Daniel but my worthy First President, whom ye say assisted in making this law."

"This same Daniel, O king, thy First President, is the guilty one!" answered Fraggood. "After hav-

ing exerted his influence with thy servants to make the law, he is now the first of all to transgress. In this he hath but sought an opportunity to show thee, O king, how utterly he disregardeth all thy commandments."

"What!" said the king, suddenly rising to his feet; "*Daniel*, the First President in the kingdom? *Daniel*, noted for his wisdom and prudence? Impossible! Ye have been wrongly informed! Beware how ye thus accuse the best man in Babylon!"

"Thy servants wonder not at thy astonishment, O king! If we had not been eye witnesses to the thing, we could have in no wise believed it; but the eyes and ears of thy servants are witnesses against him. He offers his petitions, and tramples upon the authority of our king."

"*His petitions!*" cried the excited king. "And to whom does he offer his petitions?"

"He daily offers his petitions to his God, O king!"

"*His God!* Wise man! Who can —— but —— If —— Say ye not that Daniel was concerned in making this law?"

"Yea, verily, O king! May the gods forbid that we should utter aught but truth in the presence of King Darius!"

"To me it seemeth a strange thing, that Daniel, the worshipper of the God of Israel, should frame a law that bears oppressively on himself, and upon thousands of his nation, within the realm. And it seemeth still more strange to the king, that he

should be the first transgressor! Already have I sorrow of heart because I signed the decree: but the thing is done; and my name must go down to posterity as the name of a fool. There is a mystery connected with this affair, that to me, as yet, is inexplicable. If, by any means, I find that I have been wrongly dealt with, by all the gods, I swear I will pour vengeance on the guilty heads!"

"If thou wilt permit the four princes to testify, they will say with thy servant, that this Daniel was the chief mover in the formation of this law."

"At present I have no desire to hear from any of the princes; but to think of casting *Daniel* into the den of lions is mournful beyond description—it must not be done!"

"So say we all, O king, when we consult our feelings; but the decree is signed according to the law of the Medes and Persians, and cannot be altered. The honor of the king depends upon the faithful execution of all his laws; and if in this one point thou failest, and lettest the guilty one escape, thy subjects will laugh at thy timidity; and lawlessness will prevail throughout our borders."

"Of this we may speak hereafter. I must see the First President and learn more of this matter, ere I take another step in this unhappy affair."

"Thou hast nothing to learn from him, O king, contrary to the words of thy servants. The guilty one, [illegible] mayest expect, will endeavor to justify himself in [illegible] sight of the king. But what availeth the word of the accused against the direct testimony of six competent witnesses? The law is supreme, O

king, and must be executed, or the kingdom of the Medes and Persians will be a by-word of derision among the kings of the earth."

"Ye may now depart! The king is not yet prepared to take any steps for the apprehension of the First President: ye may call again and we shall further speak on this matter. To me it is surely a mysterious thing! I cannot give my consent to ——— of this we may speak hereafter. I am now in no mood for long consultation. To-morrow morning call on the king and ye shall then learn his pleasure."

"The words that we have spoken in thy presence O king, are words of truth and soberness. Let not the word of the transgressor find more favor in thine ears, than the solemn testimonies of thy servants the presidents and princes, who fear the king and keep his commandments." And the "Union Safety Committee" left the presence of the king, with anything but pleasurable emotions.

On the departure of the conspirators, the king immediately sent for Daniel; and soon the Hebrew prophet stood in the presence of Darius the Mede. On his countenance rested that same calm smile. The king gazed upon him for a moment, and could not but notice the contrast between the serene, calm, noble countenance of the Hebrew prophet, and the uneasy, agitated visage of President Fraggood..

"Thou standest before the king, O Daniel, accused as an evil-doer! What sayest thou for thyself?"

"What is the nature of thy servant's offence, O king?"

"Thou art accused of violating a law, chiefly of thine own making, by offering thy petitions to thy God. To the king it seemeth strange indeed, that he who was the first mover in the formation of a new law, should be the first one to transgress it. What meaneth all this?"

"I readily perceive by the words of thy mouth, O king, that thou hast been greatly deceived in this matter. Thy servant had nothing to do in forming a law, whose every feature is repulsive to his soul, and an insult to the God he worshipeth. This law came from the enemies of thy servant, for the purpose of his overthrow. Having failed in every other point, with malicious hearts, they have brought forward this measure, knowing well that I could never yield it my obedience. With lying tongues have they declared before thee that it received my approbation. It is true, O king, that I have violated thy law; and, moreover, I must do so hereafter. For fourscore and ten years has thy servant offered his prayers to the God of his fathers. When a little lad in the land of Judah, I was taught by a beloved mother, to lisp the name of Jehovah. From that time to this, O king, at morning, noon, and eventide, thy servant has prayed to his God. And is Daniel to be frightened from his duty now in his old age? Nay, O king! My prayers must daily ascend to the throne of the Most High! Sooner would I suffer a thousand deaths than prove a traitor to the God of Israel."

The king was deeply moved by the words of the aged Hebrew, and continued for some time in deep silence. At last he rose to his feet, and with a voice trembling with anger, exclaimed:

"By the gods! If these presidents have come before me with lying words, I will cut them to pieces, and leave them neither root nor branch! Daniel! if thou sayest, I will have them arrested and destroyed! This very hour the word shall go forth!"

"Nay, O king! Listen to the counsel of thine aged servant. This hasty movement would not be well received among thy subjects. The decree has gone forth. I pray thee let the law have its course: and be assured, O king, that not a hair of thy servant's head shall be injured. The God that I serve and in whom I trust, shall deliver me from every danger, and no weapon formed against me shall prosper. Hereafter do with mine enemies as thou seest fit. Be assured, O king, that my life is as secure among the lions, as in the presence of my kind sovereign! That same God that preserved my cousins alive in the midst of a burning fiery furnace, can easily shut the mouths of the lions, and make them as harmless as the little lambs of the flock."

Here the king was melted into tears: and so deeply was he affected, that for a long time he was unable to speak; at last in a low key he spoke:

"O Daniel! this experiment must never be resorted to! May the gods forbid that I should endanger the life of my servant! But the writing

is signed! My heart is sad! My soul is sick! By the gods, *my* vengeance will yet come in due time! It shall not slumber!"

"Let not the king be sore troubled on account of his servant," said Daniel. "The God of Heaven shall certainly overrule this matter to his own glory; and the king and the nation shall yet learn, that there is a God in Israel."

"Thou mayest return, Daniel," said the king. I know not what to do. I fear I have been greatly deceived."

"The word of thy servant in a case like this, is not sufficient to gainsay the testimony of six witnesses. When the proper hour arrives, the king shall learn from other lips than mine the deep iniquity of these foul conspirators. Adieu, O king! Let Jehovah use his own measures for the vindication of his own law," and the First President left the royal presence.

On that night Darius the Mede laid his head on his pillow with the full purpose of delivering Daniel.

Early on the morrow, the "Union Safety Committee," accompanied by the other three, made their way into the presence of the king.

"Ye are punctual!" said the king, with a meaning glance.

"We take unbounded pleasure in obeying all the requirements of our king," said Fraggood, "and may the gods curse all those that are disobedient."

"Since ye left my presence yesterday, I have had an interview with the First President, and from his venerable lips I learn, that he had no voice in the

formation of this law, that ye say he hath violated."

"This is as thy servant expected, O king!" answered Kinggron. "What transgressor do we ever find that will not strive to hide his guilt?"

"Daniel strives *not* to hide his guilt!" replied the king in a firm tone. "He freely acknowledges that he violated the law, and moreover he assures me that he will continue to violate it three times every day. Thus ye perceive, that the First President wishes not to hide his guilt, nor even to escape the punishment. But with all the weight of reason, consistency and humanity on his side, he pronounces the law at war with all goodness, and denies having had any part in bringing it into existence. Now, with all due respect to your testimonies, which in point of law must outweigh the declaration of one man, I freely acknowledge to you, my presidents and princes, that it is my firm conviction, that ye are a band of unprincipled liars, fully bent on the destruction of this Daniel!"

At this plain royal truth, the "Union Safety Committee," turned pale, and the other three appeared to be similarly affected. But Fraggood, quickly recovering his self-possession, hastened to the rescue.

"Then my lord the king can better believe a man, that defies his power by boasting his determination to violate the king's decree at least three times a day, than he can his faithful servants who honor his laws, and who desire to bring the guilty to punishment. Let not the king be deceived by the smooth tongue of this intriguing old Israelite,

who can by the eloquence of his lips, give to truth the color of falsehood, and to deception the appearance of sincerity. Thy servants now in the presence of the king, are ready to prove all the declarations of thy servants who testified in thy presence yesterday. But what would avail their testimony in the ears of Darius? But, O king, remember that thy decree hath gone forth; and it cannot be recalled. And moreover, it is well understood in Babylon, that Daniel sets thy power at defiance; and thy decision in this matter, is watched for by tens of thousands: and if this Daniel escapes the punishment of the law, we may as well burn up our statute books and give absolute liberty to every ruffian and desperado. Law and order will be at an end, the union of the provinces will be forever disolved, and anarchy, confusion and desolation shall follow. The question now to be settled is not, 'How came this law to be enacted?' but seeing that it is enacted, is there power enough in the king of the Medes and Persians to put it in force, and if there is, will he do it? Or does he wish us to retire from his presence, and send forth heralds through the streets of Babylon, to inform the people, that the decree enacted a few days ago, and signed according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which changeth not, is abolished? Shall it be told in the streets of this proud city, that Darius the Mede has so quickly changed his mind, and is sorry for what he hath done, because one of his favorites has violated the law! Thou saidst yesterday that thy name would go down to posterity as the name of a

fool. The thing was far from being believed by thy servant then, but if thou persistest in this determination of letting the guilty escape, I know not but that will cause to be brought about the fulfillment of thine own prophecy."

Long and severe was this interview between the king and the conspirators; and all the weight of their hellish ingenuity was brought to bear on his mind. It failed to convince him that Daniel's words were false; yet, partly from a false view of consistency, and partly from the advice of the First President, he gave his signature to the death warrant of the old Israelite.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN WHICH WE READ OF A WONDERFUL "RESCUE."

THE news of the condemnation of the Hebrew prophet soon spread through all Babylon; and the hour of his execution was well known. It was the great theme of conversation among high and low, rich and poor; and there were but few who were not horrified at the awful doom of the man of God. No man in Babylon was better known, and more universally beloved, than the old prime minister of Nebuchadnezzar. His long residence in the city had rendered his name familiar to the populace, and a vast number held him in that respect bordering on veneration. His mild and friendly deportment,

whenever brought into the society of the common people, had completely won their regard and affection; and he was well known to be the friend of the working man. The poor and the needy had found ready relief at his ever open door. The little children even claimed the aged prophet as their particular friend. He found it not beneath the dignity of his station to speak to them in the street, put his hand on their little heads, and say, "May Jehovah bless my little children!" And he was hardly ever seen to stand in the streets of Babylon for a minute, before a number of his little favorites would see him, and eagerly press around his venerable form. This readily won in return the respect and affectionate regards of the parents; and nothing could exceed the sorrow that rent thousands of hearts, as the sad story of the prophet's fate fell on their startled ears. The mothers broke out in wild cries of lamentations; and the children, on learning the cause of their mothers' grief, joined in the mournful chorus. The fathers silently and sad, while the tears coursed down their cheeks, shook their heads, and compressed their lips, as much as to say, "There is foul play somewhere!"

In the vicinity of the First President's mansion were seen together numerous groups of persons, busily engaged in low conversation, while deep sorrow was visible on every countenance. These gatherings gradually swelled to one solid mass of human beings. The doors of the president's house were closed; and thick curtains were drawn across the lattices, and no one as yet appeared to enter

those rich portals. Presently the throng was in commotion; several chariots halted before the door, and a number of government officials alighted, and, with slow steps and sad countenances, they ascended the steps, entered in, and closed the door. A peculiar gathering that! A solemn, sad throng! All conversation had ceased, and the only expression given of the deep sorrow of the heart was copious tears and long-drawn sighs! The stillness was broken by the sudden appearance of several platoons of soldiers, which took their stand, and formed a square in front of the mansion. All eyes were now fixed upon that door, which was momentarily expected to be opened by the government officials, leading the noted prisoner. The door at last opened, and two uniformed officers appeared side by side, and slowly marched out. Another two followed, with the same slow, sad movement. Next appeared the sheriff, with the prisoner leaning on his arm. On the broad platform he waited for a moment, evidently to permit some of his near female relatives to embrace him before they parted. Thick and fast they gathered around the aged saint, with loud weeping and lamentation; but soon their cries were drowned amid the louder lamentations of the throng. Last of all there approached the man of God two aged females, on whose countenances old Time had strove in vain to erase some peculiar marks of loveliness and beauty. There were tears in those eyes, it is true, but they were those of affection, and not of sorrow. Those hearts were well assured that the life of the Hebrew was safe,

and that the lions would prove as harmless to him as the flames of the fiery furnace proved to the three worthies forty years before, on the plains of Dura. The sentiment of their hearts at that moment is well expressed in the old Welsh couplet,

"Ceiff llewod farw o newyn,
Cyn difa plentyn Duw."

With a pleasant smile, one of them took the hand of the prophet, and gently said:

"May Jehovah grant a happy night to his servant among the lions, and on the morrow may we have a joyful meeting."

"God bless thee, dear Perreeza!" said the man of God.

The other one now approached likewise, and, in a mild tone of voice, with a smiling countenance, said:

"Daniel, the servant of the living God, is secure in the midst of all his foes. He that quenched the violence of the fire, shall tame the fury of the lions."

"Heaven smile upon the daughter of Barzello!" was the prophet's answer.

The procession was now formed, and soon it was on its way towards the fatal spot; while the lamentations of hundreds broke upon the air. Soon they reached the vicinity of the lion's den, where thousands of the inhabitants had assembled to take the last lingering look at their aged fellow-citizen. There also was the king himself, with a number of

his most intimate nobles. The soldiers moved forward, and soon a clear space was prepared in front of the platform, on which the king and his friends stood.

The countenance of the monarch was pale, and his whole appearance gave the beholder to understand that he was one of the unhappiest of mortals. The conspirators were not permitted to occupy the same platform with himself, but were commanded to stand together on his left. Here, therefore, the guilty six remained. But "the way of the transgressor is hard." Already they clearly see that they have committed a serious blunder. They have lost the confidence of the king, and ten thousand countenances frown down upon them the weight of their sore indignation.

When the prisoner arrived, he gently bowed and saluted the king, which salutation was answered only by falling tears. The throng witnessing the emotion of the king, gave vent to their grief, and one loud, lamentable wail ascended from weeping hearts. Then, indeed, did those conspirators tremble! Then did they really learn the deep hold their victim had on the popular mind. Again the agitation was partially quieted, when the loud roaring of lions within made the earth tremble. The awful moment was drawing nigh! Daniel ascended some steps near by, and having had permission from the king, proceeded, in a few words, to address the multitude:

"Babylonians! with nought of malice in my heart against any man, and with perfect good feeling

towards the king, I yield myself to the demands of a broken law. Here, in the presence of the God of my fathers, whom I worship, and in the presence of my king, whom I respect, and in the presence of this throng, whose tears flow for my sorrow, and in the presence of these mine accusers, who thirst for my blood, I solemnly declare, that as First President in the kingdom, I never was consulted in regard to the making of this law, that is about to consign your aged servant Daniel to the lions. In honor to my king, who now laments the sad fate of his unworthy President, let me also testify, that in order to persuade him to sign a decree which had never entered his heart, the most deliberate falsehoods were poured into his ears, by those whose only object was the overthrow of Daniel. After more than three score years of public service, I cheerfully submit to my fate; knowing well that Jehovah, the God of Israel, in whom I trust, will direct this whole matter to His own glory. Hereafter it will be known in Babylon, that it was not the 'safety of the Union' that demanded the enactment of this cruel law; but that it was conceived in envy, and brought forth in malice, and thoughtlessly signed by our king, who considered all his presidents to be men of benevolence, wisdom, and understanding. For violating this law I ask no forgiveness. Sooner would I suffer a thousand deaths than prove a traitor to the religion of my fathers. Babylonians, I say no more! Accept my thanks for your tears! May Jehovah continue to grant you

great prosperity, when your friend Daniel shall have passed away."

Then turning to those whose painful duty it was to lead him to the den, he smilingly said—

"Now I am ready; conduct me thither."

The executioners, with trembling hands, laid hold on the aged form of the prisoner, and led him to the door of the den. Again there was an awful roaring of lions. As he passed the king on his way to the den, the monarch cried out—

"Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will surely deliver thee!"

The outer door was opened by the keepers, when the awful roaring of lions again made the earth tremble. The prisoner was seized with strong hands and elevated over the inner walls, and by means of strong cords was lowered into the bottom of the den, where the ravenous lions held their nightly revels. The strong men, as if afraid to hear the prisoner's dying shrieks, hastened away, and were soon seen again on the outside. The throng soon dispersed in sorrowful silence. The king, in deep agony of mind, entered his chariot, and was soon on his way to the palace; and the Hebrew Prophet was left to the mercy—— of the lions? Nay!—not to the mercy of the lions.

How sad was that night for royalty! Filled with remorse for having signed the fatal decree, and knowing not how to retrace his steps, or to retrieve the effects of his rash act, the king passed his night in agony. The sleepless potentate is a demonstration that pomp and power cannot yield peace of mind.

Sweet strains of music from harp and lute, fall not on the ear to-night, as we pass the royal palace. Those dainty dishes provoke not the taste of Darius the Mede. No merry expression creates a smile on the royal countenance. No witty remark can banish the gloom from the monarch's mind. With a heavy heart and a throbbing brow, he paces the length of his royal bedchamber, and thus did he converse with himself:

"How he justified the king, almost with his dying breath! Ah! but I justify not myself. Why did I sign that silly and cruel decree, by which the prime jewel of my kingdom is for ever lost? Why did I not consider the thing well, and consult the First President? Alas! it is now too late. The deed is done, and there is no remedy! How the multitude sympathized with the noble prisoner! How copious their tears and how audible their sobs! How beloved in the estimation of the populace was that aged Daniel! What think they by this time of *my* prudence and wisdom? Have I not lost in this the estimation of my people? Will his God, indeed, deliver him? Is he not already torn by the hungry lions? How cruel a fate for so worthy a man! But if Daniel *is* spared, no thanks to me. Will not this people inwardly curse me, and wish me out of their borders? What poor returns to *them*, for the grand reception they gave *me!* What will my nephew, Cyrus, think of my sagacity and power of discernment?"

He threw himself upon his couch, in the hope of drowning his mental agony in slumber; but the precious boon is not granted. All the drugs of "Araby

the blest," and from the distant "Ind," could not, on this night, woo sweet sleep to the imperial pillow. The very picture of wretchedness, the monarch tossed to and fro on his downy bed. After a long while he fell into a dose, and thought he was at the lion's den, and before him lay the bleeding, mangled form of the First President! Terror-struck, he leaped from his couch, and found himself in his bed-chamber. Another long soliloquy followed. Again he strove to find repose in sleep; but no sooner were his eyes closed than the awful roaring of lions would startle and terrify the wretched monarch.

Let us for a while leave the unfortunate Mede, and take a view of the hero of the lions' den.

When Daniel was thrust among the lions, the sun was yet one hour above the western horizon, and the light from the top of the den, made the interior comparatively light. When he found himself at the bottom, for a minute he walked to and fro, then fell on his knees, and with eyes toward the holy habitation of his God, he began to pour his prayers into the ears of the God of his fathers. The lions, quite unaccustomed to such a sight, looked on for a while in silent wonder. They then ran together to the other end of the den, where the old lion of all—the "lord of the manor"—and his aged companion, the old lioness, the mistress of the "establishment," were, heedless of the youthful pranks and occasional quarrels of their offspring, enjoying a good comfortable sleep. A loud roar from one of the youngsters, which was answered by another louder roar from his companion, aroused the slumbering energies of the

old couple. They uttered an ill-natured growl, very much on the same principle that any one else would, on being unnecessarily disturbed in the midst of a quiet nap. Perhaps the growl was equivalent to, "Children, you are very rude. Make less noise, or I shall attend to you!" This reproof (if reproof it was) did not seem in the least to frighten the young lions. One of them, the one that roared the loudest, put his head close to that of his sire, and if he said anything, it was in so low a whisper that it could not be heard at any distance. From what immediately followed, I am inclined to think the young chap told the "old folks" something in this fashion:

"Get up quickly! Come to the other end of the den, and there you will see a sight that you never saw before in all your born days. There is another victim; but he has no more the appearance of *common* victims than thou hast. I know by his eye he has no fear of the lions. Why, think! as soon as he came to the bottom of the den, he walked to and fro among us as deliberately as my brother here, or myself, would walk among our companions: and after he had satisfied his curiosity, he bowed himself, and went through a kind of performance that is entirely beyond my comprehension. From some reason or other, I feel no more of a desire to devour him than to make a furious leap on this old corner rock and eat it up. Come! get up, thou and mother, and see for yourselves."

I said, from what followed that low whispering, I was led to believe that something of this kind was its purport. After the whispering was over (if whis-

pering it was), the old lion uttered another growl, as much as to say, "That sounds to me like rather a 'tough yarn'—but I guess I will go and see for myself." And now behold the old couple slowly rise and shake themselves from their lethargy, and the whole company starts for the other end of the den. The old lion led the way. Close by his heels followed the old lioness. Next in order followed the "rest of the family." They soon arrived at the spot, and sure enough, it was just as the young lion had declared. The old lion paused for a moment, but he soon made up his mind that there was nothing to fear. So he slowly approached. He paused again. Daniel reached out his hand and spake. The old lion fancied the peculiarity of that voice: so with eyes half closed (lion modesty) he slowly walked up to the man of God, and with the innocency and harmlessness of a young spaniel, he licked the hand of the prophet. After having partially conquered his embarrassment, he uttered another low growl, and looked toward the rest of the company, as much as to say—"Come this way! Don't be afraid; the gentleman will not hurt you." They slowly and silently gather around the strange visitor, and each one appears to be particularly pleased to be permitted in some way to come in contact with his person. And when the darkness of night gathered around them, the old lion answered for his soft pillow, the lioness laid at his feet, and the young lions stretched themselves on either side, to keep him warm; and soon the Prophet of Jehovah was fast asleep.

"Peaceful be thy silent slumber."

If ever a sleepless mortal, wearied with the tediousness of a painful night, rejoiced to see the first glimmering dawn of the morn, King Darius did, after that dark, dreary night of agony. No sooner was it fairly day, than the monarch ordered his chariot, and soon, with a number of his nobles, he was once more on his way toward the den of lions. The royal chariot, as it moved through the various thoroughfares, attracted the notice of the inhabitants. Its destination was soon understood, and as there was some faint hope in the minds of thousands that the God of Daniel would miraculously interfere and save his servant, they had accordingly held themselves in readiness to be early at the den. They, therefore, with all haste followed in the direction of the royal train, and soon they were on the spot. The king was greatly astonished to find already there a large number of the inhabitants. The movements and excitement of the people had also brought together to the spot the six conspirators, who were greatly astonished to see the king. The monarch, in trembling accents, ordered the stone to be removed from the door of the den. The order was quickly obeyed. While every eye rested upon him, the king entered, and stood inside of the outer door, and in a lamentable tone he cried, in a loud voice—

"O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"

Oh, the breathless silence of that moment! A thousand hearts throb with deep emotion, in painful

suspense to learn the result. But hark!—a voice as clear as a lute and as sweet as an angel's harp, ascends from the dark depths, and falls on the ears of the multitude—

"O–king–live–for–ever!"

It was enough! Gladsome shouts echoed from a thousand tongues! The joy was unbounded. Their sorrow for their old friend was turned into joy, and the name of the God of Daniel was praised.

Immediate orders were given to bring the old Hebrew up, and soon, with a smiling countenance, he stood in the presence of the king, and in the presence of the rejoicing throng.

Then said Daniel, turning to the king—"My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the mouths of the lions, that they have not hurt me, forasmuch, as before Him, innocency was found in me; and also, before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

An aged man at this moment was seen urging his way through the crowd, as if endeavoring to find admittance into the presence of the king. His venerable appearance and pleasant countenance served to make him room. The throng parted, and soon he was by the side of Daniel, who stood near the king.

"We meet again, Apgomer!" cried Daniel, in a familiar, friendly voice: and then turning to the king, he said:

"This is my good friend Apgomer, O king, one of the few friends of my early days. He hath words to communicate to the king, in the presence of this throng, that will give thee to understand clearly

that this law was prepared on purpose to ensnare thy servant Daniel."

"Let my worthy friends, Fraggood and Kinggron, with their four companions, the princes, stand in this direction!" said the king, with an angry expression of countenance.

The conspirators, with paleness gathering on their brows, obeyed, and stood facing the king.

"Now, O Daniel, thy friend Apgomer may give in his testimony before the king, in a clear and loud voice."

"O king, live for ever!" said Apgomer. "This day thy servant is four score and ten years old. From the days of my childhood have I dwelt in Babylon; and never for any long period have I departed hence. Soon thy servant shall leave this world of sorrow, I stand on the verge of the grave. At this time, with deep soberness, I appeal to the God that dwelleth in light, for the sincerity of my purpose, in thus appearing before my lord the king. My words will be few, therefore, O king, I pray thee hear me patiently.

"These men who now stand before thee, and by whose continual importunity thou gavest thy signature for the arrest of thy servant Daniel, are wicked and deceitful men, and with lying words have they deceived thee, O king. Their secret devices are well known to thy servant. With mine own ears have I listened to their midnight plotting; and from their own lips have I learned their fixed purpose to destroy the innocent without cause, even thy servant Daniel. For many months, O king,

these cruel men have sought an occasion against the First President, and after having failed in every other point, they thought at last of this. On the night of the fourth day of the eighth month, at Castle Garden, these men did assemble, and there, within an inclosed bower, near the hour of midnight, when they thought no one was nigh at hand, this measure was devised. I stood behind the bower, and their words of malice fell on my ear. Be assured, O king, that the 'safety of the Union' was no part of their object. This was but a lying pretence to deceive the king; their only object being the overthrow of thy servant Daniel, whom they greatly envy on account of his great wisdom."

"Believe not this man, O king!" said the pale and trembling Fraggood; "seeing he prepareth lying words before thee."

At this moment a young man, whose countenance denoted some passion, rushed on the stage, and, without any apology or ceremony, began to speak:

"Let not the worthy and aged Apgomer be called a liar! A lie never escaped those venerable lips, O king! As soon may the gods lie! Thy servant is the doorkeeper of the Castle Garden. Apgomer, on that night of which he spake, was an inmate of my house, which house is within the castle walls; and I have known him oftentimes to have entered the garden at a late hour, after the throng had dispersed. On this very night, O king, as thy servant was about to close the garden gates, behold six men approached, with countenances partly covered, and demanded admittance. I at first refused, and ordered them

back to their lodgings; whereupon President Fraggood gave me to understand that I stood in the presence of two of the presidents, accompanied by four of the princes. They were accordingly admitted, and returned after midnight. What their purpose was thy servant knoweth not; but of this one thing be assured, O king, Apgomer can never utter a falsehood!"

"It is enough! It is enough!" cried the king. "Seize the guilty wretches! Let the cowardly liars meet the doom they had prepared for my servant Daniel! Up! and throw them to the lions!"

No sooner were the words spoken, than a score of rough willing hands seized the guilty forms of the conspirators, and, amid the curses of an indignant throng, they were thrown to the depth of the den, to meet a far different fate from that of the man of God.

Then spoke the king:

"I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever; and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in Heaven and on earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

"O king, live for ever!" cried the well pleased throng. Daniel was taken into the royal chariot, and seated by the side of the king, and the royal train moved forward, amid the triumphant shouts of

the populace. Thus fidelity to the God of Israel was abundantly rewarded, and great were the "*triumphs of the Higher Law.*"

CHAPTER XXXII.

EMANCIPATION, AND "HOME, SWEET HOME."

In two years after the transactions of the last chapter, Darius the Mede died; and about the same time died also Cambyses, the father of Cyrus, in Persia. Cyrus, therefore, returned to Babylon, and took upon him the government of the new empire.

The history of the lion's den, with all the intrigues that led to it, made Daniel thrice dear to the inhabitants of Babylon. His name commanded reverence wherever it was mentioned. He was looked upon as an angel of mercy, goodness, and wisdom, sent by the gods to bless the race. In this surely they were not mistaken.

Cyrus, for a long time, had desired the opportunity of a prolonged interview with Daniel, of whom he had heard so many wonderful things, both as a minister to the king of Babylon, and also while administering the affairs of the kingdom under the reign of his Median uncle. The Persian was already well versed in the history of the lion's den, and was highly delighted with its grand termination. Of the God of Israel he had heard much of

late, and he felt strong inclination to hear more. And of whom could he learn to better advantage than of the famous Hebrew prophet? The God of Israel was gradually preparing the mind of the great warrior for receiving a clearer and more extensive knowledge of himself. The celebrated Persian, from his infancy, had been taught to worship and adore the imaginary gods of his own country; but he had always felt a dissatisfaction in regard to the proofs of the existence of these gods; and many of the popular theories of Persia, in regard to their various deities, were, to him, full of inconsistencies and contradictions. That there was some great overruling power he had no doubt, and as he advanced in years, this conviction became stronger; but still he experienced the daily unhappiness, resulting from the absence in his mind of any definite idea in regard to those superior powers to which he paid his sincere adoration. From year to year he became more established in the belief that he was under the direction of some unseen agency, which he called the "gods;" yet his views of this agency became more confused from day to day. To all intents and purposes, the great Persian conqueror was a worshipper of the "unknown God."

Not many days after his arrival in Babylon, the royal chariot was seen to halt at the door of Daniel's residence; and, moreover, the king himself was seen to enter, while the conveyance was driven back.

"Thou wilt pardon this sudden intrusion," said Cyrus; "I have long desired an interview with the president, and for this purpose I have entered his

house; and the king is happy to find that he is not absent."

"My lord the king hath greatly honored his unworthy servant by entering under his roof," said the old Hebrew. "This condescension of the great Persian conqueror, is a favor of such a magnitude, that it shall never be forgotten."

"Let not my aged friend Daniel speak thus," said the king, in a friendly manner. "Call it not condescension in Cyrus, to seek the society of one who has justly earned the reputation of being the most profound statesman that ever moved among mortals. Let the king rather consider himself honored in being permitted to listen to thy words of wisdom and understanding. May the gods forbid that I should utter words of insincerity in thy presence, but be assured, O Daniel, that the King of Persia, at this time, stands in the presence of his superior."

"Humility becometh well the potentates of earth. But yet, O king, thou beholdest not the real grandeur of thy mission. Thou knowest not that thou art the peculiarly anointed—not of the gods, but of the only God of Heaven, the Almighty Jehovah, the God of Israel, to pour His wrath upon the nations, and to restore the children of Judah to their own land."

"Thou hast touched a theme on which, above all others, at this time, the king would choose to dwell. Of the gods I have but an imperfect knowledge. Conscious am I, that under the particular direction of some invisible power, I have been led forward in all my movements, from my youth up. I was

taught to worship the gods in my juvenile days; but ever since I arrived at years of thought and judgment, my mind has been greatly perplexed by what seemeth to me to be glaring inconsistencies and contradictions in our theory of religion. That there is an Almighty, unseen power, that presides in the universe, and that concerns itself in the affairs of mortals, I have no doubt; but that this invisible agency is correctly defined in Persian theology, is not at all clear to my mind. I am comforted, however, in the consciousness that I offer my adorations to those invisible powers in deep sincerity, be they what they may. If, in thy profound wisdom, O Daniel, thou canst impart any knowledge to the king in regard to the gods that dwell on high, such knowledge will be gratefully received."

"Praised be the name of Jehovah, under whose direction thou comest at this time to seek knowledge. Happy is thy servant Daniel to know, that he is indeed able to impart unto the king that which he inquireth after. Jehovah is the only God, and the signs which He hath in all ages given of himself, O king, are abundant. We hear much of the exploits of the gods of the heathen; but of these performances there are no proofs, and they only exist in the imaginations of their worshippers. Not so with *our* God—the God that made the world. The history of our nation, which history no one can gainsay, is an assemblage of miracles. Examine the records of our historian Moses, who conversed with God face to face. Our God brought us out from under the dominion of Pharaoh, with a strong hand and an out-

stretched arm. He gave evidence of His presence by the infliction of twelve terrible plagues on the King of Egypt and his people. He opened before the Hebrews a passage through the deep rolling sea, and brought them dry-shod to the opposite shore. For forty years were they fed with manna from heaven, while water was called forth from the flinty rock. And as the waves of the Red Sea were parted before them as they left Egypt, so, in like manner, were the waters of Jordan parted as they left the plains of Moab; and thus were they settled in the land of Canaan. Since that day, nine hundred and fifteen years have passed away; and during all this period, Jehovah hath given unto his people abundant signs of his presence. Thus our God is not a being that dwells only in the imaginations of men, but His wonderful acts, O king, are written on the pages of correct history."

"If these things are so, surely the God of Israel is the Only God. But, Daniel, thou knowest that it is much harder for Cyrus the Persian to believe these things than for thee, who art a native Hebrew, and a firm believer in the God thou worshippest. Have not the Persians their histories of their gods as well as ye?"

"They have, O king! But those histories are dark, indefinite, and without date, which is a conclusive evidence that they are fiction and not history. If my lord the king hath aught to doubt in regard to the correctness of our *ancient* historians, concerning our God, what thinketh he of those miraculous displays of Divine power witnessed by his servant, and

by thousands more, during the last three score years and ten?"

"The king will be exceedingly glad to hear of all the wonderful things that his servant Daniel witnessed during his long experience among the Babylonians."

"Time would fail me, O king, to recount *all* the wonderful dealings of Jehovah, as witnessed by his servant. I shall speak of but few.

"Not many years after thy servant and his three companions came to this great city of Babylon, the great monarch of Chaldea had a wonderful dream. He awoke from his slumbers, and lo! the vision was gone. He was sensible that the dream was wonderful, and that it pertained particularly to the future of his then extensive empire. But not one clear feature of the vision could he recall to his mind. In deep agony of mind, he sent for the wise men of Babylon, among whom myself and my three companions had the honor of being numbered. The chief of the astrologers sent not word to thy servant nor his comrades, but hastened with his own favorites into the presence of the king, where they expected to meet with easy success. But great was their astonishment, when, from royal lips, they learned that they were required to restore to the king the lost dream. They confessed their inability, and declared unto the king that such a thing was among the impossibilities. The king was angry, and drove them from his presence; and, moreover, he gave orders for all the wise men of Babylon to be slain with the sword.

"The next morning thy servant was apprehended

by the captain of the guard, and was informed that I was appointed to die. This was the first for me to learn of the decree. He gave me a full history of the proceedings. I prayed for admission into the presence of the king. I was admitted. I begged of the king to stay proceedings against the wise men, and gave him to understand, that the God whom I served would make known unto me the dream. My request was granted. I went home and acquainted my companions with what had transpired. On that night we gave ourselves to prayer. We implored the protection of our God. Jehovah answered our prayer. The dream, in all its parts, was made known to thy servant. In the morning I went into the presence of the king, and restored unto him the lost dream. The king knew that the thing was certain; and for awhile he feared the God of the Hebrews; and thy servant and his companions were at that time greatly promoted. This was one miraculous interposition of our God in our behalf, O king.

"Many years after this event the King of Babylon set up a great image. The day of its dedication was appointed, and all present were commanded to fall down and worship. At this time thy servant was in Egypt on business of importance, pertaining to the government. My three companions, who are yet alive, and residents of Babylon, could not, as Hebrews and worshippers of the God of Israel, fall down before any idol god; and, therefore, they nobly refused to comply with the command of the king. For this they were taken and bound with cords, and thrown into the midst of a burning

fiery furnace. But this fire did not consume them, O king. They walked unhurt in the midst of the fire; and there was not even the smell of the flames on their garments. This is no idle story, O king, but reality, and it is recorded on the State papers of the Chaldean empire. The God whom they served delivered them in the midst of danger.

"Thou hast heard, peradventure, of the king's insanity. That calamity came to pass in exact accordance with the words of thy servant, as delivered before the king, twelve months before. The history of this wonderful event is now in thy servant's possession, in the handwriting of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

"Four years ago, O king, in the third year of Belshazzar's reign, thy legions were encamped before the walls of this great city. On the very night on which Babylon was taken, the king, with a thousand of his lords, were in the midst of a drunken revelry. There the name of the God of Israel was blasphemed, and the vessels of His temple desecrated, when, lo, they were suddenly arrested, in the midst of their hilarity, by the appearance of the fingers of a man's hand writing on the plaster of the wall over against the candlestick. This strange manifestation produced great alarm and consternation. The wise men were called, but they could not read the writing. At last thy servant was called, and found the words to have been written in the original Hebrew; they were these: MENE, TEKEL, PERES. And their interpretation was this: God hath numbered thy king-

dom, and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. Was not this a clear sign, O king, that there is a God in Israel?

"Soon after this, thy servant was called into the presence of Darius the Mede, and into the presence of my lord the king. By their united authority I was appointed as First President of the provinces. This proved displeasing to my colleagues. A plot was devised for my overthrow. I was thrown into the den of lions. That same God who preserved my companions alive in the midst of the devouring flames, kept thy servant alive in the midst of devouring beasts. They offered me no harm, O king. On that night I sweetly slept, with my head resting on the bosom of the lion.

"These, O king, are but few of those wonders, which the God of Heaven hath wrought in behalf of His people, in this land of their captivity; but this will show the king that our faith is not based on cunningly devised fables in regard to our God; but upon infallible proofs, which Jehovah hath given of Himself. I fear that I weary the patience of my lord the king."

"Proceed, Daniel; the king is well pleased to hear thee!"

"Be it known to thee, O king, that all the awful calamities that of late have befallen Babylon, have come to pass in perfect accordance with the predictions of God's prophets, some of whom prophesied over two hundred years before these events transpired.

When thou comparest these prophecies with the actual occurrences, there remaineth no longer a place for doubts. Even the draining of the Euphrates, O king, was spoken of by the prophet of Jehovah, over one hundred and fifty years before the wonderful thing was conceived in thy mind."

"Enough, O Daniel! Enough!" cried Cyrus. "If thou art able to show me this thing, I ask no more!"

The Hebrew sage, with a peculiar smile of satisfaction on his countenance, rose from his seat, and took down from a shelf what appeared to be a scroll of ancient manuscript.

"Listen, O king, to the words of Jehovah's prophets in regard to the taking of Babylon:

"'Make bright the arrows, gather the shields! The Lord hath raised up the spirits of the *kings of the Medes*, for His device is against Babylon to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of His temple. Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand! Shout against her round about! Behold I will stir up the *Medes* against them, who shall not regard silver, and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain! Exalt the voice! shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles! Go up, O Elam! Besiege, O Media! Therefore shall evil come upon thee, and thou shalt not know from whence it cometh. Desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, and thou wast not aware. O thou that

dwellest upon many waters! *I will dry up her sea*, and make her springs dry. A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be *dried up*. In her heat I will make their *feasts*, and I will *make them drunken*, that they may repose and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the Lord. Arise ye princes, and anoint the shield! Prepare slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers, that they do not rise and possess the land; for I will rise up against thee, saith the Lord of Hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, and son and nephew, saith the Lord.'

"These, O king, are some of the predictions of Jehovah against Babylon, by the mouths of His holy prophets. And has not my Lord the king been an eye witness to their fulfillment!"

"They have all come to pass to the letter, O Daniel! Surely the God of Israel is the God of gods! Why should I any longer doubt? Thus it appears that Cyrus the Persian has been under the directions of the God of Israel, to bring about these wonderful events!"

"In this thou sayest truly, O king. And strange as it may sound in thine ears, be assured, that thy name was known in Israel for over one hundred and fifty years before thy birth."

Here the Persian gazed on the Hebrew for awhile in silent wonderment; and it was evident from his countenance, that he had some doubts in regard to the truth of the sentence.

"Did the king rightly understand thy meaning?

Sayest thou that my *name* was known in Israel for one hundred and fifty years previous to my birth?"

"The king rightly understandeth his servant. Thy name was carefully written in a book by one of our prophets, two hundred and twenty years ago. Happily, I have now in my possession a copy taken from the original, written by one of our scribes, and bearing date which maketh it over one hundred and seventy years old. If the king desireth, thy servant will read."

"Read, Daniel," said the king, with much feeling.

Daniel, from the same scroll from which he had read before, which was the Prophecies of Isaiah, read—

"'Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to CYRUS, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates; *and the gates shall not be shut.* I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces *the gates of brass*, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.'"

The Persian was deeply moved. Indeed, tears were in the monarch's eyes. He rose, and in the deepest reverence, exclaimed—

"I acknowledge the God of Israel as the great ruling power of the universe! Under his infinitely wise directions I stand ready to do His pleasure, and accomplish His great designs."

"One great favor it is thine to grant, O king, according to the word of the Lord. For their iniquity the children of Judah were carried captive into Babylon, and Jerusalem was rendered desolate. According to the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, they were to remain in this land of their captivity for seventy years. This period, O king, in a few more months will be at an end. I pray thee, give permission to the children of Judah to return to their own land, and build up the old waste places, and raise again a temple to the God of Israel."

"This thy request, O Daniel, shall be granted," said the king, in a firm voice. "The proclamation shall go forth from the king, and all that is needful for the enterprise shall be supplied."

"Praised be Jehovah!" said the aged Hebrew. "At last the days of Judah's captivity are numbered, and Jerusalem shall be restored. Thy God, O king, whom from henceforth thou wilt serve, shall greatly prosper thee in the affairs of thy kingdom."

"I trust my faithful servant will consent to tarry with the king, to whom, from time to time, he will deliver lessons of wisdom. I purpose soon to remove my court from Babylon to Ecbatana, in Persia, whither I hope my faithful servant Daniel will consent to remove."

"Thy servant in this is willing to abide the pleasure of the king."

The king left the presence of his aged minister with strange, but yet pleasurable emotions; hurried into his chariot, which was waiting, and was soon on his way to the palace.

The next day the following proclamation was heralded through the streets of Babylon, and sent to all the provinces:

"Thus saith Cyrus, King of Persia: The Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will offering for the house of God, that is in Jerusalem."

This proclamation was received by the captive Jews with gladness and great joy. Measures were immediately put forth for the accomplishment of the grand enterprise; the king, in the mean time, continuing to give every encouragement to these measures, under the firm conviction that he was under peculiar guidance of the God of Heaven.

* * * * *

A brighter day never dawned on the plains of Judah. The brilliant rays of the morning sun were seen flashing upwards from behind Mount Zion, like

so many messengers in uniform, proclaiming the near approach of their sovereign master. Presently, the great regent of day himself, in slow and silent majesty, made his appearance, and once more smiled on the "City of the Great King." At an early hour, multitudes were seen pouring into the city, from east, west, north, and south: and on each countenance might have been read a degree of excitement and animation. This was the twenty-fourth day of the second month, in the second year after their return from Babylon; and on this day was to be laid the foundation of the Temple of the Lord. This was well understood throughout the land; and we wonder not, that from cities and villages, from hill and valley, the emancipated Hebrews hastened by thousands to witness a scene at the thought of which their hearts throbbed with intense emotions. By the sixth hour the great multitudes had congregated themselves together to witness the solemn and joyful ceremony. There stood the priests, with their long, flowing robes, with trumpets in their hands. There, also, stood the Levites, and the sons of Asaph, with cymbals to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David, King of Israel. The builders had laid the foundation. Then the trumpets were blown, and the sons of Asaph struck their cymbals. Songs of praise ascended on high, and they gave thanks unto the Lord because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, and they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests, and Levites, and

chiefs of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid, before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, so that the people could not discern the voice of the shouting from the voice of the weeping; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the voice was heard afar off.

The ceremony was over. The concourse were dismissed, under the benediction of the priests, and the masses moved homeward in all directions.

Two chariots of magnificent appearance, drawn by beautiful steeds, were seen slowly leaving the ground. They drew much attention from the crowd, as they leisurely drove along through the winding streets of Jerusalem. At last the chariots halted in front of a beautiful mansion, which had the appearance of having of late undergone a thorough repair. From one of these chariots alighted three men, with their hair whitened with age. Their whole bearing gave the beholder to understand that they were noblemen of high distinction. From the other chariot alighted, first a man of middle age, next appeared a woman, who appeared to be somewhat younger. Next, an aged man, exceedingly dignified in his manners. Last of all, an aged lady alighted with great elasticity of step, and whose countenance gave positive signs that it was once the throne of beauty. With smiling countenances they entered the house, and made their way to a large apartment, furnished in a beautiful style. They were seated. Presently two young damsels rushed into the apartment, apparently in high glee. One ran and imprinted a warm

kiss on the cheek of the venerable man before mentioned, and the other embraced the aged matron.

"Heaven bless my dear grandchildren!" said the aged man, leaving a fond kiss on the fair cheek of young Miriam.

"And may they always delight in the law of their God!" responded the aged lady, leaving another one on the lips of the lovely Rebekah.

The salutation being over, there was a short pause.

"Why looketh my brother so thoughtful and sad on this day of general rejoicing in Judah?" asked the aged lady, directing her address to one of those aged men that had alighted from the first chariot.

"I am not sad, sister," replied the brother, "but am thoughtful. And what thinkest thou my mind dwelt upon?"

"Surely, I cannot tell. Some past scenes in Chaldea, peradventure."

"Nay, sister. But I was thinking that seventy and two years ago this very night, myself and my two brothers here, accompanied by our beloved Jeremiah, entered this house, and revealed the sad story of our captivity to our beloved Perreeza."

"Ah, dear Hananiah! and a dark night of sorrow that proved to your almost broken-hearted sister."

"But, I trust, that Jehovah hath overruled the whole in the end to the glory of His great name," said Mishael.

"Surely he hath!" quickly answered Mathias. "For ever blessed be the memory of that delightful

night, when these eyes, at the house of Barzello, rested on the bright charms of the 'Rose of Sharon.' "

"The rose no longer blooms, Mathias!" answered Perreeza. "Its hues are faded; and, under the pelting storms of life, its petals have well-nigh withered."

"The tint may fade, and the petals may wither, but sweeter than ever shall its fragrance continue to perfume the surrounding air," answered the husband, his face glowing with pure affection. "In that better country, whither we are going, where flowers never fade, and where roses for ever bloom, the 'Rose of Sharon' shall yet flourish in immortal beauty, and shine in bright eternal youth."

The full, melodious voice of young Rebekah was now heard in another apartment, warbling one of her sweetest songs.

"Jehovah bless the child!" cried the grandmother. "How that voice of melody cheers my heart!"

"Mother!" quickly replied Monroah. "Permit me to call her into this apartment, where she may sing and play thy favorite 'song of Judah.' "

"Thou art ever kind to thy mother, dear Monroah; do as thou desirest."

Rebekah was called.

"Will my daughter sing and play for us her grandmother's favorite 'song of Judah?' "

"With pleasure, dear mother," cried Rebekah, as she quickly left the apartment.

In a moment she returned, bearing in her arms a

stringed instrument, with which the reader, by this time, is somewhat familiar. Yea, the old "harp of Judah" also has returned from the captivity, and is once more safely lodged in its own native Jerusalem. Time has left some impression on its aged frame, but its tones are sweeter than ever. In that family it is held as a priceless treasure; and its melody shall sweetly fall on ears yet unborn, when the hands, that now so skillfully sweep its well-tuned strings, shall be palsied, and the sweet voices that blend with its thrilling chords, shall be silent in the grave.

Rebekah sat near her grandmother, playfully struck the chords for a moment, then sang and played the following, into which she threw her whole soul:

"When we our weary limbs to rest,
Sat down by proud Euphrates stream,
We wept, with doleful thoughts oppressed,
And Sion was our mournful theme!

"Our harps, that when with joy we sung,
Were wont their tuneful parts to bear,
With silent strings neglected hung,
On willow trees that wither'd there.

"O Salem! once our happy seat,
When I of thee forgetful prove,
Then let my trembling hand forget,
These speaking strings with art to move!

"Again we hail the sacred hall,
That echoed to our youthful lays!
And Amonober's children all,
Have reached their home to end their days.

"To thee, Almighty King of kings,
In new-made hymns my voice I'll raise,
And instruments of many strings
Shall help me to adore and praise.

"How sweet to die in Judah's dale,
And with the fathers calmly rest,
The thought of sleeping in yon vale,
How soothing to my throbbing breast!

"A few more days of grief and pain,
And then adieu to every gloom;
For soon we all shall meet again,
Beyond the portals of the tomb."

The "song of Judah" was ended. And now, dear reader, after having accompanied these worthy Hebrews throughout their various trials, in a land of strangers, and back again to the gates of Sion, and having been profited by their noble examples, we bid them now an affectionate farewell, praying that every land and nation may soon witness the universal *triumphs of the "Higher Law."*

THE END.

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